The Meaning of Church Membership

B. H. BRUNER

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THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

By

B. H. Bruner

Author of "Evenings With the Master," "The Evangelistic Message," etc.

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To
MARY GREGG
AND
ROBERT HARRISON
both new church members, this little book
is affectionately dedicated.

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FOREWORD

B. H. Bruner has written a most valuable book. It is a timely volume. Something like this should have been written long ago to help the pastors and churches in the care and culture of the new converts. If this book could have been written twenty-five years ago and used widely by pastors in the instruction of new church members, there would be a different story to tell concerning the numerical strength of the church, the quality of the membership, and in the better work done for Christ.

One time a boy fell out of bed. His mother asked him to explain how he came to fall out. His reply was, "I went to sleep too near the place where I got in." Many new members have not gone far after their baptism. It has not been altogether their fault. The churches and ministers have not given enough serious attention to the conservation of new members. In their partial defense for any blame attached to them for unfaithfulness, it can be said for the pastors and churches that no literature has been prepared to aid them in such an important work. This book will help fill this need.

There are several effective ways to use this book:

1. Gather together the new members after a special ingathering following such evangelistic

periods as Easter, Pentecost, or a revival meeting. Ask each one to promise to be present every meeting until the studies are completed.

2. Set a definite evening or some other convenient time once each week for the group to meet. Continue to meet until the book, *The Meaning of Church Membership,* is finished.

3. Order a copy of the book for each new member. The church can present the book as a gift or the book may be purchased by the new members.

4. Assign a chapter each week to be discussed at the next meeting. Keep the discussion on a high plane. The questions at the end of each chapter will help the discussion and can be a special "home assignment" each week.

5. Secure the best possible teacher. The pastor would be the logical man to teach the group. If he cannot possibly do this, assign the task to some capable member. The teacher of the class should be continued from year to year in this work.

6. Such a class should be provided every six months at least. Put into the class all those new members who have become members of the church since the beginning of the last class.

7. Provide Bibles for the members of the class to be used during the study period.

8. Some churches practice the giving to each new member a copy of the New Testament, a

baptismal certificate and a year's subscription to some one of the church papers. This is important.

There is no more expressive word in the New Testament than the word "shepherd." The word has almost dropped out of the church's vocabulary. It needs to be restored with all its meaning. What, therefore, is needed just now is not any less emphasis on soul winning but more emphasis on shepherding or conservation. The church must keep open wide the front door for all who will follow Christ, but at the same time, keep the back door closed.

This well-written, valuable and timely book will help close the back door of the church and save the saved.

JESSE M. BADER,
Secretary of Evangelism.

Indianapolis, Indiana

A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Church members, both new and old, ought to know something about the Church they have joined. They ought to know something about the local congregation with which they have identified themselves, what it expects to give them, and what it expects of them. They ought to know something about the need for, the origin of, and the long and glorious history of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world. They ought to know something of the origin, the history, and the growth and progress of the religious body of which the congregation which they have joined is a part. They ought to know for what purpose the Church exists, what its program of future work is, the details of the organization of the local units and of the larger co-operative agencies through which the missionary, benevolent and educational work is carried on. They ought to understand the privileges and obligations of membership in the Church, and what their place is in both the work of the local congregation and the larger work.

To let the new members of the Church know the kind of an organization they have joined; to help them get the best the Church has to offer and to give their best to the Church; and

to remind those who have been in the Church for many years of what membership in the Church really means, is the primary purpose of this book. It is hoped that it may be used as a text for study groups among new and older members of the Church, that many pastors and congregations will put a copy of the book into the hands of each person who joins the Church, as a gift, and that it may be blessed in building for the future a more consecrated and loyal Church membership.

The idea for such a book originated in the minds of some of our leaders who have been face to face with the need for such a study, and the author was asked to prepare the manuscript. In its preparation many ministers and teachers have been consulted. The author appreciates very much the splendid suggestions and criticisms of John R. Golden and Jesse M. Bader, and the kindness of Mr. Bader in preparing the short chapter of instructions for pastors and teachers. The largest debt is due to Dr. B. A. Abbott whose suggestions and help have been invaluable, and who has read the manuscript several times. The book is sent forth with the aim and purpose of helping the Church to better fulfill its ministry among men and that it may not fail as that agency through which the Kingdom of God may be fully realized upon earth.

Chapter One

THE ROMANCE OF REVELATION

"In the Beginning God": This is the proper place for members of the Church to begin in their attempt to understand the Church. It has been said that "God comes to man first. Unless He does, man can never find Him. Human life gains its meaning from the fact of God's passionate concern for us. Jesus came to express this life and impart divine power—to give life more abundantly. What He began to do the Church through Him continues. The Church is the stream of spiritual power in which we participate as a great common fellowship in the reality of the divine life." The God in whom Christians believe is a seeking God. He was in His world in the beginning and He is in His world now. He did not create the world and then go off to some far-away throne and leave it to run itself. What Jesus said of God is eternal truth—"My Father worketh hitherto, and now." From the very beginning this God has been revealing Himself to men.

When men first began to think about God they began to seek God. Religion reached one of its highest points when man in his search for God realized that God was also seeking man.

The story of this seeking man and the seeking God finding each other is the one great romance in the life of the race. Most of the other great religions of the world represent man seeking an indifferent God. Christianity reveals a God Who is seeking man—as a shepherd seeks a lost sheep, as a woman seeks a lost coin, as a father seeks a wandering child. (Luke, 15th chapter.)

God Revealing Himself: Nature has always been one of the clearest and surest paths to God. God has always revealed Himself through the universe which He has created and sustains. The heavens declared the Glory of God and the firmament revealed His handiwork long before the 19th psalm was written. As man began to study the heavens above and the earth beneath he came to feel that the universe did not come into being by chance. When man began to talk with God

"In all the myriad tongues of God's
sweet world"

then, God had succeeded in making His first great revelation to man.

God has also revealed Himself to man through what we call human nature. Ancient people thought of their gods in terms of human nature. Their gods had many traits which are common to man. Often these were the baser

traits of human nature. In the beginning, this belief that God is revealed through human nature was a very crude one, but it led on to that sublime thought of the God of this universe in terms of personality rather than blind force. A misunderstanding of God's revelation of Himself in terms of human nature has led to some false conceptions of God's nature, but in spite of the difficulties of this method of revelation, and the many abuses to which it has been subjected through the ages, "in travelling through man to God we are journeying along a safer, surer, higher and more luminous pathway than when we are travelling through nature to God."

The Bible, a Revelation of God: It is in the Bible, which contains the religious books of the Hebrew people and the early Christian Church, that the Romance of Revelation reaches its climax. In the Old Testament we have the story of a seeking man and a seeking God gradually coming closer to each other. That story begins with a picture of God seeking man, calling to him in the cool of the evening in a garden. We read on a few pages and we have a picture of man seeking God through his sacrifices. A seeking God finds Abraham dwelling among his father's tents and herds and, perhaps, worshiping the sun as a god, and calls him to become the founder of the greatest of all ancient religions. A seeking God finds Moses after he has

run away from his education and culture in Egypt and has become a shepherd in the desert, and rekindles the old fire in his soul and makes him the first statesman of ancient history. A seeking God finds Samuel as a boy dreaming the long, long dreams of youth, and makes him the spiritual adviser of a nation as it started on its long and eventful career. A seeking God finds Elijah when he had become discouraged and quit, when he was so dejected he wanted to die, and sends him back to his task with new courage and power. A seeking God finds David the shepherd boy, makes of him a mighty savior of his people, one of the greatest kings of the ancient world, and one of the sweetest singers of all time. A seeking God finds young Isaiah while he is worshiping in the temple, purges his lips and cleanses his soul, and sets him on fire as a prophet of righteousness and peace.

And these men who stand out like mountain peaks in the Old Testament were all earnest seekers after God. Abraham, in his search for God, forever discredited the idea of human sacrifice in religion, and gave to the world its faith in one God. Moses, seeking God, became the first great deliverer of an oppressed and enslaved people, and gave to the world the greatest moral code ever produced by any people. Samuel, seeking God as a boy, and con-

tinuing that search, gave to both the ancient and the modern world the idea "that to obey is better than many sacrifices," and the keen insight that God judges man by his inward rather than his outward appearances. It was David, seeking God, crying out of the depths of his soul in his matchless psalms, who presented the race with one of its greatest religious and literary treasures. And it was the young Isaiah, seeking God in His holy temple, who gave us those prophetic messages which have thrilled and challenged the souls of men in every generation since they were written, and which tell us of the coming of the Christ of God, the Savior of the world, the Prince of Peace. Surely there is no romance in the life of the race comparable to this.

"God's Message to the Human Soul": This was the title of the last book which came from the pen of the great Scottish preacher, Dr. John Watson. It was a book of lectures on the nature and use of the Bible. Those who read the Bible carefully and thoughtfully find that it is just what Dr. Watson calls it—"God's Message to the Human Soul." In that book the author says:

"As you travel down Old Testament history you may find yourself sometimes in strange byways, but sooner or later you are brought face to face with God. The writers are intent upon

one thing, and that is righteousness; they are ever seeking for one person, and that is God. There is not only a progress, but it is a progress upward; from the valley the path climbs the hillside, till it reaches the finer and rarer air of the Gospels where we are living in the outer court of eternity and at the gate of heaven. The innumerable details of the Book are only its body; the living soul of the Book is religion, the fellowship of man with God. We lay aside the history which is but the stalk and leaf of the plant; we garner the grain, which is the revelation of God. One supreme purpose governs and illuminates, invigorates and glorifies the Bible, and that is its moral and spiritual truths. These are the things that make the Bible to be the world's one supreme Book of religion, and explains its moral supremacy in the life and the literature of the world."

Because God speaks to the souls of men in the Bible through the actual experiences of real human characters, it has become His greatest revelation to the world. The message of the Bible is the message of inspired lives (Heb. 1:1, 2), the heart story of people who have been touched by God. The Bible is inspired because it is the source of never-failing inspiration in the life of the race. So long as men and women are willing to test the inspiration of the Bible by the standards of human experience in its

hours of defeat and victory, in its hours of sin and struggle and doubt and joy, rather than by the standards of a critical and often unfriendly scholarship, we need have no fear. We can trust the Bible when we come to it in the hours of our deepest need as human beings and as searchers after God, because, in the realm of human experience the Bible always rings true. Here we find the best evidence of its inspiration and trustworthiness as a revelation of God.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. How do Christian and non-Christian methods of seeking God differ?
2. Have you ever pictured God in your own thought as Luke pictures Him in the 15th chapter of his gospel?
3. Recall some of the experiences in which nature has made you aware of God.
4. Does nature reveal a good or an evil God?
5. What kind of a God does the elements and beauty of nature most often suggest to you?
6. Recall your first conception of God. Did you think of Him as a man?
7. What Godlike traits have you discovered in human nature? Has any person ever made you think of God by his life?
8. Is the Bible a book or a library?
9. What parts of the Bible interest you most? Are you acquainted with its great men and women?
10. What part of the Bible is of chief value for Christians?
11. Have you read the Bible enough to pass an intelligent judgment upon its contents?
12. Give your own reasons for belief in the trustworthiness of the Bible as a revelation of God.

Chapter Two

JESUS, THE PERFECT REVELATION

The Climax of Revelation: The Romance of Revelation, the story of a seeking man and a seeking God coming together, reached its climax in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. In the cry of a newborn babe floating out upon the midnight air of that "little town of Bethlehem," God was speaking in a language which all men everywhere and in all ages could understand. For the record of this climax of revelation we must go to the first four books of the New Testament. In the Gospels we see man and God coming together in Jesus of Nazareth. "The holiest and divinest thing in all the Bible is its Christ."

Jesus the Perfect Man: The Jesus we meet upon the pages of the four Gospels came into the world as a little child. Mary was His mother and Joseph the carpenter His foster-father. Jesus Himself, it was said by the angel announcing His birth, was to be called Emmanuel, which means "God with us." He was therefore God in human form, living the perfect human life. He lived in the home with other children

and played in the village streets and on the surrounding hillsides of Nazareth.

Jesus enjoyed being with people. He attended many feasts and must have laughed with the people often in their hours of joy. He could weep with people in their sorrows. He had time to pick up a little child and hold it on His knee while He was teaching the disciples. He was interested in men who were mending their nets, and He knew something about fishing. He told some men who thought they were experienced fishermen where to get the biggest catch they had ever had. He had watched the farmer sowing his grain, walking along with him as boys liked to do then and now, and noticing that some of the seed fell on hard ground and was devoured by birds. Jesus often became weary and sleepy just as other people do, and He was sleeping so soundly one night in the stern of a little boat that even a severe storm did not waken Him. The pictures which we have of Jesus in the Gospels, especially in Matthew, Mark and Luke, are those of a perfectly human character. It was the humanity of God in Jesus which so attracted men and women that they wanted to follow Him and fall in love with Him while He was here on earth.

Jesus Was More Than Human: But this Jesus who was perfectly human was also hu-

manly perfect. It was this fact which led those who lived with Him for almost three years to put Him in a class by Himself and look upon Him as being more than human. He was the world's first, and last, perfect man. And He was more than a perfect man. No man ever convicted Him of sin. He was entirely free from those petty jealousies and hatreds which kept His disciples, and which keep most people now, in trouble all the time. He was not overmastered by that ambition for power and popularity which ruins so many men in their attempts at leadership among their fellows. He never used His tremendous power for Himself, even in the face of some of the most severe temptations which could possibly come to man.

At all times and in every situation Jesus was complete master of Himself. He had what men call poise. His enemies never caught Him off His guard for a single moment. He lived a life which has set the standard for human perfection for all time, and yet he did not have the slightest trace of any "holier-than-thou" attitude in His character. For nineteen hundred years the example of Jesus has been the final standard in human conduct. He was the perfect man, the portrait of God in flesh and blood.

The Perfect Revealer of God: God has come very near to man in nature. He has come still

nearer in human nature. But God did not come all the way to man until the perfect example of human nature appeared on earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The progress of the race has centered around great persons. The important changes in our civilization have come through the influence of persons. History would have very little interest for us if it had to do with events only and not persons. The greatest changes that have ever been brought about in human history have come through this person we call Jesus of Nazareth. The most wonderful story of human progress that has ever been written centers around His name. God has used the perfect man, Jesus of Nazareth, to give the world the most perfect revelation of Himself.

When we measure all the things and forces in the universe we come to the conclusion that man is the greatest of them all. Put a man and a mountain side by side, and the man looks very small. But when you remember that the mountain does not even know that it exists, and is powerless to move itself even one foot by itself, and that man is aware that he exists and can either climb to the top of the mountain, tunnel his way through it, or fly over it, man becomes the greater of the two. The greatest man we know anything about is Jesus of Nazareth. When we hear Him say, "He that hath

seen me hath seen the Father," we may feel that we are at the beginning of one of the surest ways of approach to God. In these words Jesus is not trying to draw a picture of Himself, but is trying to tell men who and what God is. If in Jesus we "have man at his highest, our humanity carried to its best," then, we may say that "the supreme path to God is through the humanity of Jesus, and the perfect humanity of Jesus supplies the ideal path." There is nothing in the universe to account for the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth unless at the heart of the universe there is a God like Him.

The writers of the Old Testament believed that man was created in the image of God, and that God reached the peak of His creative power in man. There were men in Old Testament times who reflected the image of God in their thought and lives. But the supreme ideal of humanity was not reached until Jesus came. In him we have a complete unveiling of God to humanity. In Him the image of God is made complete. When we celebrate His birthday each Christmas season, "we celebrate the day when the love of God dawned on the world, and the fear of the gods began slowly and sullenly to give way before the coming new day."

How Jesus Revealed God: Jesus of Nazareth became the greatest revealer of God because

He talked to men about God in a language which they could understand. For Jesus, God is spirit; God is life; God is light; God is human; God is working in His world; God is a servant and not a monarch; God is a Father and not a king or judge; God is love. All these terms meant something definite to men. The teachings of Jesus are full of simple and beautiful illustrations of all these characteristics of God.

When Jesus wanted to show men how God acted He also used familiar pictures. According to Jesus, God acts like a woman who has lost a coin and is not content until she seeks and finds it. And when she has found it she is so happy she calls in her neighbors to rejoice with her. God acts like the shepherd who discovers, when he has his sheep in the fold for the night, that one out of the hundred is missing, and he will not sleep until he has searched the mountain side for the one lost sheep. God acts like the father whose heart is heavy because the family circle has been broken and one of his sons is in the far country. And God acts like that father did when he welcomed the lost son back to the home, forgave him for his sin and ingratitude, and gave him the best he had in the home. God is like the man who responds to the urgent cry of need at midnight and helps his neighbor. The God of Jesus is a

God whose love and care extends to the least of all His creatures on earth, and who, in spite of the fact that some men are evil and curse Him, makes His sun to shine on the good and the wicked alike. Jesus almost exhausted the common and beautiful figures of speech of His day to make men feel how human and loving God is in His attitude toward His children here on earth.

God the Father: All that Jesus said about God, and all He has made men realize about God, rests upon His fundamental conception of God as a Father. When He taught men to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," He opened the way to the heart of the universe. If the religion of Jesus means anything at all, it means that at the heart of this universe, back of nature and human nature, there is a God who knows, and cares, and loves—a God who is the Father of all men. The term Father is used by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament more than two hundred times to describe God. When Jesus taught that this Father-God so loved the world that He gave His Son for its redemption, "He at once, and for all time to come, transferred the point of emphasis in the world's idea of God from the attribute of power, where it had so long been, to the attribute of love." Philip was right when he insisted, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth

us," for nothing short of the revelation of God as a loving Father can ever permanently satisfy the hearts of men. In His conception of God as Father, Jesus of Nazareth reaches the supreme height of His revelation to men.

Jesus the Way to God: Jesus is not only the way through which God comes to man in His most perfect revelation; He is the way by which man must finally come to God. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," said Jesus. He also said, "No man cometh unto the Father except by me." The day came when men saw in the perfectly human and the humanly perfect Jesus of Nazareth one whom they recognized and confessed as the Christ the Son of the Living God. The word "repent" was constantly upon the lips of Jesus and the demand for repentance was primary in His preaching. We hear Him urging men to confess Him before men that He might confess them before the Father, and concerning that ordinance which became central in the early Church we hear Him saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It was said of Jesus that He came "to save His people from their sins," and the salvation which He offered was not something aside from Himself. He was and is the way to God. He was and is the final truth about God. He was and is the embodiment and the example of the only type of life that finally leads men to God. In

the beginning, salvation was a matter of personal relationship to Jesus by faith and of absolute obedience to His will. It is still the same in our day.

When Jesus talked about sin He always used the word which meant "missing the mark." Sin, in the mind of Jesus, was that destructive thing in human life that had kept men and women below the real levels of manhood and womanhood. It was that thing which had cut men and women adrift from God and made the long, painful search for God necessary. It was the thing that had kept God from making a complete revelation of Himself to men. Jesus was a Savior, in that He destroyed the power of sin to forever enslave and wreck human life, and in so doing opened up the way for a perfect relationship between the Father in heaven and His children on earth.

When Jesus taught His disciples, and all men, to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," He went on to explain what He meant by the Kingdom in these words, "Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." The Kingdom of God, an expression which Jesus used over and over again in His teaching and preaching, and an expression which He gave some of His finest parables to illustrate, simply meant that Jesus looked forward to a day when there should be such perfect relationship between God and His chil-

dren that His will should be carried out just as perfectly here on earth as it is in heaven. It is as the perfect revelation of a seeking God to seeking men, and as the perfect Savior of seeking men from the sin which has cut them adrift from God, that Jesus of Nazareth is pictured on the pages of the New Testament. It is this perfect picture, which has so engraved itself upon the hearts of men as to make the religion of Jesus the most powerful redemptive force in the life of the race.

In this chapter we have not tried to discuss the person or the nature of Jesus in a theological or metaphysical way. We have tried to show how the Jesus who has been accepted by the Church members as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, is the most perfect revelation of God the Father which the world has ever known.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What appeals to you most about the perfectly human Jesus who is revealed in the New Testament?
2. In what incident, or incidents, does Jesus reveal Himself as humanly perfect?
3. Give three situations in which Jesus revealed his complete self-mastery.
4. In what way did Jesus change the world's conception of God?
5. See how many passages you can find in the New Testament where God is spoken of as Father.

6. Give some illustrations which Jesus might use to make God real to man if He were speaking in our day.
7. Try to put some of Jesus' parables (the parable of the prodigal, for example) into modern language.
8. Has the conception of God as a Father made it easier for you to become a Christian?
9. How has Jesus become "The way, the truth, and the life," for the race?
10. What requirements for salvation are to be found in the teaching and preaching of Jesus?
11. How does Jesus' conception of sin differ from the Old Testament conception?
12. Can men come to God through Jesus Christ without the aid of the Church?

Chapter Three

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

Why We Have the Church: The Church of Jesus Christ was not handed down from heaven ready-made. There was a time when it did not even exist except in the mind and purpose of Jesus. While Jesus was on earth He called twelve men to become His disciples. These men Jesus trained for leadership and service in His Kingdom, but He did not build up any organization around them. So far as we know He never suggested to these men the type of organization which they should build after His death. We know, however, that Jesus had the Church in mind and all through His ministry was selecting and suggesting material out of which it was to be built. He hailed the truth which Peter expressed in his confession—"Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God"—as foundation material for His Church, and it was out of human nature very much like that of Peter and the rest of the disciples that He hoped, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to create the body of His Church.

The final words of Jesus to His disciples were very clear and very significant: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The group which waited in Jerusalem for power took these words seriously and staked their very lives upon the promise of their Master. When Peter called the group together to select some one to take the place of Judas, he made it clear that their primary business was that of witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 1:15-26.) The Church came into being as an organization in which the new life in Christ could be nurtured and developed, and through which men and women could witness for Jesus.

The Birth of the Church: With the final words of Jesus ringing in their ears, and with a great hope in their hearts, the disciples continued to wait in Jerusalem for the power which had been promised for their new task. It came on the Day of Pentecost nineteen hundred years ago. The best New Testament scholars are agreed that the Day of Pentecost which came seven weeks after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, is the birthday of the Church. With the coming of the Spirit on that day the disciples seem to have become fully conscious of the important work which Jesus had left for them to do. With the coming of that power which enabled these disciples to witness for Jesus before the representatives of all nations in Jerusalem, and to speak a message

which all nations could understand, the Christian mission began.

The birthday of the Church was marked, not only by the coming of the Spirit with miraculous signs, but by the preaching of a definite gospel message by Peter and the response of three thousand people to that message. In his sermon, Peter first refutes the charge that the queer actions of the disciples under the influence of the Spirit was due to drunkenness. Then, he accuses the men before him of helping to crucify Jesus. He reaches the high point in his sermon when he declares that this same Jesus whom the Jews have crucified had been brought forth from the tomb by God the Father and exalted to the high position of Lord. The Lordship of Jesus was first preached at Pentecost. When the multitudes felt the full power of the Spirit operating through the passionate and convincing preaching of Peter, they asked for the way of salvation from their sins. In answer to their question Peter had a very definite and satisfying answer. (Acts 2:37-40.)

The Holy Spirit: The book of Acts has generally been called the Acts of the Apostles. It has been suggested that a better name would be the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised His disciples that when He was gone the Spirit would come to give them power to witness for Him. Acts is full of the Holy Spirit.

The power which came at Pentecost came through the Spirit. The gift which was to follow baptism in the name of Jesus was to be "the gift of the Holy Spirit." In John's gospel we have the clearest statement about the Holy Spirit which is to be found in the New Testament. The speaking in tongues, the power to heal the sick, the power to escape from prison, and all the power which the disciples had after Pentecost was ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit sends the leaders out to preach, or hinders them from going. The whole work of the Church in its earliest days seems to have been under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There is no very definite doctrine of the Holy Spirit worked out in the book of Acts. Except in a few cases the work of the Spirit is not marked by special miracles. In most cases the Spirit operates through the preaching and teaching of the apostles. The elaborate doctrine of the Holy Spirit as one of three persons in the Holy Trinity is not worked out in Acts, and we doubt if the primitive Church knew anything about it. The Holy Spirit and the power which came to the disciples at Pentecost was a matter of experience rather than doctrine. They were so busy witnessing for Jesus under the power of the Spirit that they did not

have time to reduce their interpretations to a theology.

The Church Organized: In the beginning the Church did not have much organization. Deacons are not mentioned until we come to the sixth chapter of Acts, and elders are not mentioned until the eleventh chapter of Acts. Immediately following Pentecost the Church was more like a family than anything else. It had none of the marks of an elaborate organization and did not have any meeting places except in the homes of its members. For a short time the "believers were all together and had all things in common." The New Testament Church was like a home, a home, as some one has suggested, "which was all astir with the entertainment of a beloved guest."

There soon came a time, however, when this simple organization did not meet all the needs of the growing Church. The twelve apostles had assumed the leadership and most of the work as well as the preaching had fallen upon their shoulders. When this work became too heavy they suggested that seven deacons be selected by the Church. Their special work was to be that of "serving tables." This expression probably means that the work of the deacons was "the organization of charitable relief, either in goods or in money, and this would require personal gifts, as well as business capac-

ity and good reputation." We know, however, as in the case of Stephen, one of the deacons, that the seven were expected not merely to "serve tables," but also, by virtue of their importance in the Church, to preach and teach. Not until the Church had grown and congregations had been established in several cities is there any mention of the appointment of elders. The first elders were appointed by the apostles. The word "elder," or "bishop" as it is often translated means "overseer." The elders were the spiritual "overseers" of the local congregations and carried on much of the work which was later done by the local pastors or ministers.

The Church Persecuted: Following the Day of Pentecost and the preaching of the apostles, the Church grew rapidly. "The Lord added to them daily those who were being saved." At first the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, who had been so bitter in their opposition to Jesus, did not molest the group of believers. The leading apostles were arrested a few times and called before the Council, but they were released without any punishment. Once they were imprisoned for a short time, but were defended by some of the Pharisees. As yet these early Christians had not definitely broken with the Jewish Law and observances. They were, for the most part, perfectly good Jews as well as Christians.

The first real persecution began with the death of Stephen. The Sadducees, who held the office of the priesthood in the temple, and whose policy was purely selfish and worldly, were responsible for the minor persecutions just after Pentecost. In this they do not appear to have had the support of the Pharisees. The serious break between the early Christians and the Pharisees, who were the guardians of Jewish legalism, did not come until after Stephen began to preach. From all we know, Stephen was the most remarkable man in the early Church aside from the original apostles. He had been chosen as one of the first seven deacons. He was full of enthusiasm for the Church. He was eloquent and had the ability to lead. He was educated in the law and the prophets and could hold his own against the best men the Pharisees could send against him. He was brought before the Council and charged with blaspheming the name of God, and when his accusers could not answer the logic of his arguments, the feeling was so strong against him that he was dragged outside and stoned to death. The story tells us that Saul of Tarsus stood by and watched Stephen die, and it is entirely possible that he had something to do with his accusation and death.

The death of Stephen, which at the time seemed to be a terrible calamity in the Church,

turned out to be a great blessing and one of the most important events in the history of early Christianity. Following this blow which had been struck at the Church the disciples were driven in all directions. Only Peter and the native Christians were allowed to stay in Jerusalem. Everywhere these followers of Jesus went they preached the gospel and established congregations. It was probably some of these persecuted and scattered disciples who started the Church in Antioch, which city was to play such an important part in the life of the Church. It was in Antioch that the disciples first received that name Christian, by which they soon were to be universally called. (Acts 11:26.)

The Conversion of Saul: The Church at Antioch soon became almost as strong as the Church at Jerusalem, and it was while these two congregations were debating over the matter of receiving Gentiles into the Church without first making Jews out of them, that the man who was to become the great apostle to the Gentiles came into the Church. One of the greatest events, if not the greatest in the first century of the Church, was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. We know very little about his early life. He was educated for the position of a rabbi. His education was general and he knew what was going on in the world outside Jewish

circles. His life in Tarsus as a boy and a young man gave him important contacts with the Gentiles. While a boy he learned the trade of a tent-maker and had worked some at that trade. Just when he came to Jerusalem as a student or as an active teacher, we do not know. It is evident, however, that he was not in Jerusalem or the vicinity of Jerusalem during the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. We are not sure that he ever saw or knew Jesus in the flesh. He came into the foreground as a persecutor of the Church following the death of Stephen.

The conversion of Saul was dramatic and spectacular. The story of what happened on the road to Damascus where Saul was going with authority to exterminate the Christians, caught the imagination of men then as it does now. In Acts there are three accounts of this conversion. (Acts 9:3-7; 22:4-11; 26:12-19.) In his letters Saul, who became known as Paul after his conversion, makes four very definite references to his experience. (Gal. 1:13-16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor. 4:6.) Whatever happened that day when Saul was stopped on the road to Damascus by a blinding light, and heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him, he went away from the scene convinced that "he had seen Jesus as truly as the first disciples had done." He had not been in Damascus long until he was taken into the Church which he

had set out to persecute. His experience seems to have been so genuine that he had little trouble in convincing the Christians that he was their friend rather than their enemy. The fact that these Damascus Christians, who had undoubtedly heard that he was coming to destroy them, finally received Saul into their congregation, is the most convincing evidence we could ask for as to the genuineness of his conversion experience.

After his conversion, for a period of time, we do not know how long, Paul went into seclusion to think his new faith through. This chapter, which has never been written, is surely one of the greatest in his life. After this he appears in Jerusalem, and after a visit to his home in Tarsus, he is called to Antioch by Barnabas who was one of the most important leaders in that growing Church. He labored for several years with the Church in that city which at the time was probably the third largest city in the Roman Empire.

It was during this period that definite steps were taken by the congregation at Antioch to open the doors of the Church to the Gentiles. All Jewish forms were to be considered as secondary and optional, and men and women were to be received into the Church upon the confession of their faith in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God and their obedience to Him in the ordi-

nance of Christian baptism. During his fourteen years in Antioch Paul realized fully that the gospel was for all men everywhere, and he prepared himself to interpret the religion of Jesus in terms that all men could understand. Here he worked out the plans for those missionary journeys which were such a vital part of his Antioch ministry and of early Christianity. The Church at Antioch has well been called the first missionary Church. From it, under the leadership of Paul, the first foreign missionary campaign was launched and successfully carried out. The missionary program, and the opposition which it has faced in every generation, is as old as the beginnings of the Church.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. From the recorded words of Jesus could we construct a Church which would be after His mind?
2. Are the needs which called the Church into being in the first century still real?
3. Should we make as much of the birthday of the Church as we do of the birthday of Jesus?
4. Make an outline of the main points in Peter's Pentecost sermon.
5. Make a list of the passages in John's Gospel and Acts in which the Holy Spirit is mentioned.
6. Does the Holy Spirit work in and through the Church now as it did in the beginning?
7. Does the modern Church need a more elaborate organization than the early Church had?
8. How far has the simple organization of the early Church been reproduced in any modern Church? Can it ever be entirely reproduced?

9. Would a severe persecution directed against the modern Church be a calamity or a blessing?
10. Read all the passages concerning Saul's conversion and then try to put the story in your own words.
11. How many missionary journeys did Paul make, and what Churches did he establish?
12. Can a Church be truly Christian without the missionary spirit?

Chapter Four

CONQUEST AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE

Christianity Becomes Aggressive: Under the leadership of Paul the Church got out of Palestine and Christianity began an aggressive program of world-conquest. Those who were interested, and especially its enemies, soon discovered that it was more than a Jewish sect. It was a new religion and its strength lay in the fact that its disciples believed that their leader, Jesus of Nazareth who had been killed, was now alive again. About seventeen years after the death of Stephen and the conversion of Saul a notable council was held in Jerusalem. James was the undisputed leader in the Jerusalem Church. Paul and Barnabas were the chief leaders at Antioch. The story of this council is found in Acts the 15th chapter, and in the 2nd chapter of Galatians.

As a result of this council Paul and the Antioch Church were left free to receive Gentiles without first demanding that they become Jews. It was still necessary, however, for those Jews who became Christians to abide by the Jewish law. Following this council Peter visited Antioch, and his action, in first eating with the Gentiles, and then for fear of the Church at Jerusalem refraining from this practice and pre-

vailing upon others, including Barnabas, to do the same thing, resulted in a lively argument between Peter and Paul. (Gal. 2:11-14.) There is little evidence that any bitterness between these two great apostles came as a result of this argument, but from this time on Peter plays a less important part in the history of the Church. It was this argument which created the situation and gave the opportunity for Paul to exercise his apostleship among the Gentiles, to which he had been called by the Holy Spirit and the Church at Antioch. (Acts 9:15; 13:2.)

Three Important Events: There are three events which are of vital importance in the understanding of the history of the early Church. The death of Paul in 62 A.D. at the command of the Emperor Nero; the burning of Rome in 64 A.D.; and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The death of Paul marked the end of what has been called the formative period in the early Church; the burning of Rome, which was laid to the Christians by Nero, marked the beginning of a series of severe persecutions which continued more or less until the Empire became Christian under Constantine; and the fall of Jerusalem left those congregations which had looked to the mother-church for guidance and help to struggle for themselves. From this date Jewish Christianity began to lose its force.

For forty or fifty years following these important events we have little recorded history of the Church. We have enough, however, to know that one of the most important and thrilling battles in the history of the human race was getting under way during this period. The Church, which hitherto had been made up of the most common people in the Empire, was beginning to attract to its membership some of the most influential people and leaders of the nation. From the beginning the general attitude of the Empire toward the new faith was that of indifference. Being tolerant toward all religions, Rome decided to let the Church alone. But the time soon came, following these three events, when Rome could not afford to let the Church alone. When the leaders of the Empire became satisfied that this new faith was bent upon nothing less than the utter destruction of the pagan gods and temples and the winning of the entire world to its risen Lord, they began to map out their lines of conquest and defense. During this period the forces were being organized on both sides for a titanic struggle.

The Clash With Pagan Rome: To understand the greatness of this conflict between the early Church and pagan Rome we must notice some of the elements of weakness and strength in the opposing foes. The traditions of paganism were strong. Rome's religions were thousands

of years old when Jesus was born. The cities of the Empire were filled with beautiful temples and shrines. The gods and goddesses were worshipped with rites and festivals which were spectacular and which appealed to those human lusts which Christianity was set to destroy. And paganism was strong in its "infinite adaptability. It made peace with every god and goddess which it met. It adopted them all." But this paganism had its weaknesses also. It lived by tradition rather than by investigation. In its nature there was no vital association between religion and morals. Even the gods themselves were immoral. Paganism taught men to fear rather than love their gods, and in the hour of death it had no satisfying message for its followers. It was against this paganism with its strength and weakness that the Church was to battle for two hundred and fifty years.

The Church also had its strength and its weakness. To meet the traditions of paganism it had only the story of One who had lived and died just a few years before; one who had no standing with the authorities while he was alive, and who was crucified between two criminals in his death. Over against the beautiful temples of the pagan gods the Christians had only their own humble homes as places of worship. In the face of the spectacular rites and feasts of the pagans the Church had only its

simple service of song and sermon and prayer, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. And in direct opposition to the spirit of compromise which dominated paganism, the Christians presented an uncompromising message. They recognized no God but the God and Father of their Lord Jesus Christ. They refused to admit the truth of any other religion but their own. They boldly proclaimed their belief that salvation could be had in no other name but that of Jesus Christ. The early Church did not have a single one of the marks upon it which made paganism strong.

But the Church had its strength, and when we set the strength of the Christians against the weakness of paganism we have another story. Christianity challenged its followers to think, to investigate, to examine the traditions upon which paganism rested. When people began to think they soon came to see through the rites and superstitions of the pagans and forsake them. One of the pagan writers of that period is reported to have said that on one of the pagan shrines the notice was posted, "Christians Outside." The Christians saw too much. The living god in that shrine was a big snake with a mask tied on—good enough for the pagan; but the Christian would see the strings. The Church answered the immorality of the pagans with its own moral character.

When Christians mingled with the pagan throngs, there was a difference in their way of living which all men could notice. They also protested against the immoral practices in the pagan temples and against the pagan attitude toward women and children. And in the face of the fear which the pagan had toward his gods, and the utter helplessness with which he faced death, there was the love toward God and the confidence and trust of the Christian in God and the assurance of immortality through Jesus Christ. The early Christian who died rather than give up his belief in Jesus, made a profound impression upon the pagan world. (For this section I am greatly indebted to Prof. T. R. Glover and his splendid chapter, "The Church in the Roman Empire," from his book, *The Jesus of History*. If the book is available, this chapter should be read.)

The Final Victory: This conflict with pagan Rome was a long and bitter one. Most Church historians hold that there were at least ten major persecutions carried out by the rulers of the Empire, beginning with that under Nero in 64 A.D. and ending with the one under Diocletian in 303 A.D. The stories of "Nero's unspeakable cruelties in making a gala event of the killing of the Christians, covering some with inflammable material and using them for torches to light up the gardens at night," are

well known. Stories of equal cruelty and bloodshed can be multiplied by ten during that period. We may well believe that only the major persecutions received any notice from the Roman historians and that thousands of Christians perished in obscure places. It is said that in Rome in the catacombs of St. Sebastian alone there rest the bodies of 174,000 martyrs.

The last great persecution under Diocletian was exceedingly bitter and cruel. When he came to the throne in 284 A.D. many Christians were holding high positions in the government, and there were some Christian servants in the royal palace. These were immediately executed. In 287 A.D. a decree was issued in severe condemnation of the Christians. In 295 A.D. all the soldiers in the army were ordered to offer sacrifices to the Emperor as god. Those who refused as Christians were executed. Everywhere churches were destroyed and those who persisted in their faith were either killed or deprived of their freedom and privileges as citizens.

Constantine, who was proclaimed Augustus by his army in 303 A.D. was kindly disposed toward the Christians from the very beginning. After the battle of Milvain Bridge, in which Maxentius was defeated, Constantine became the sole Emperor in the West. About the same time Maximinus was defeated by Licinius who

became sole Emperor in the East. Constantine attributed his victory to the God of the Christians, and as a result granted full tolerance to the Christians, making it lawful for anyone who wished to embrace Christianity. In this he secured the co-operation of Licinius, and the edict, which was issued in 313 A.D. and known as the Edict of Milan, proved to be one of the most important documents in the history of the Church. For the first time in history, in all probability, a civil government granted full religious liberty to its citizens.

In 319 A.D. Licinius became jealous of Constantine, thinking he was ambitious for universal sovereignty, and reversed his attitude and policy of toleration toward the Christians. Many of them were subjected to the most cruel treatment and their work was hampered in every possible way. But in 323 A.D. Constantine conquered Licinius and became Emperor of both the East and the West, and with this victory Christianity became the undisputed religion of the Empire. Thus Christianity triumphed over the paganism of the Roman Empire after two hundred and fifty years of almost constant struggle, suffering and bloodshed.

The Heresies of the Church: There is another phase of the conflict between the Church and pagan Rome which must be mentioned briefly. The Church had to battle for its life

within as well as without. From its very beginning certain heresies began to threaten its life. These heresies were doctrines, certain views of God, Christ, human nature, and the Church, which were not in accord with the teachings of the original apostles. The New Testament mentions some of these earliest heresies. (2 Tim. 2:16-18.) Instructions for dealing with heretics is given in Titus 3:10.

The chief heresies may be grouped under the general term Gnosticism. This name comes from the Greek word which means knowledge, and most of the heresies were a combination of Oriental Mysticism and Greek Philosophy. The Gnostics believed that all matter was evil, including the human body. The soul could only be delivered through a special mediator, who was identified with the Christ of the Christians. Salvation became a matter of mysterious rites and ceremonies through which people were initiated into the Church. To both the Oriental and the Greek with their highly speculative minds the gospel as preached by the apostles seemed too simple and crude. When they were through with the gospel only a diluted form of Christianity was left. The human Jesus, around which the earliest faith and worship of the Church had centered, became an abstract divine principle who had appeared on earth for a brief time, but had never really been human. Some

of the Gnostics discarded the moral law altogether, and others practiced an extreme form of asceticism.

This conflict from within did one thing of tremendous importance for the early Church. It called into action a group of Christian scholars called Apologists, who formulated and stated the chief beliefs of the Christians as an answer to the heretics. Justin Martyr, who has been called an evangelist in a philosopher's robe, was one of the greatest of these Apologists. His defense of Christianity was in the form of a series of Dialogues. Another of the great Apologists with Irenaeus. His work, *Against The Heretics,* was written about 180 A.D. It is a powerful book in which the author discusses rather than condemns. Instead of seeking to combat heresy with violence, he combated it with earnest and thoughtful argument. The leaders of the Church have not always been as wise as Irenaeus in dealing with heretics. Gnosticism reached the height of its power during the second century, but declined rapidly during the first half of the third century. During this long conflict many heretics lost their lives, but not until 382 A.D. did a law of Theodosius I. authorize capital punishment for heresy. The victory of the Church over the heresies was not as spectacular as the victory along other lines, and it was fraught with much dangerous com-

promise; but it was, nevertheless, one of the great victories of early Christianity.

Spiritual Decline of the Church: When we look at this marvelous victory of the Church over pagan Rome, we discover that it was a victory mixed with, and greatly marred by serious compromise. After being defeated in its desperate fight, paganism had its revenge in "the almost complete paganization of the Church which speedily followed the enforced conversion of its unwilling adherents." As the Church grew more powerful under the patronage of Rome it steadily became less Christian. The pagan membership soon became large enough to dominate the policies of the Church. The Church of 313 A.D. was a vastly different thing from that simple organization of Christians which was fighting the paganism of Rome one hundred years after its birth, and during the next five hundred years it was to change a great deal more, and for the worse.

With the rise of the popes in the Western Empire the Church began a new and dangerous era so far as her spiritual life was concerned. The effects of papal power were demoralizing in every way. By the beginning of the eighth century the Church was unspeakably corrupt. The civilization of Southern Europe was gone. Learning was almost extinct except in Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Barbarian rulers ap-

pointed as bishops, relatives and military followers, without regard to their literary, moral or spiritual qualifications. While the Church was supreme so far as power was concerned, Christianity was practically unknown.

From 800 to 1517, the period in Church history generally known as the Middle Ages, the spiritual life of the Church was practically submerged beneath the ambitions and schemes of bishops and popes. On Christmas day in the year 800 Charlemagne accepted the crown of the Holy Roman Empire from the hands of the pope at Rome. The idea of a Holy Roman Empire and a Holy Catholic Church, "each having world-wide dominion, each advancing the interests of the other, each supreme within its own sphere," was one of the most ambitious ideas that has ever entered the mind of man. The idea was never fully realized, for the Empire which came into being with the coronation of Charlemagne was soon divided. While the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Catholic Church were theoretically the counterpart of each other, practically they were in mortal combat most of the time from the middle of the eleventh century to the middle of the fifteenth century. Emperors deposed popes and secured the election of others in their places. Popes excommunicated Emperors and co-operated with their rivals in securing changes of dynasty. It was a period

when the chief desire of men seemed to be to lord it over their fellows.

When we look only upon the corruption of the Church and the rulers during this period we are not surprised that it has been called the Dark Ages. But outside the Holy Catholic Church there were groups of Christians who kept the true spirit of their religion alive. And during this period, in spite of the ecclesiastical corruption and intolerance and political and social oppression, civilization was making some real gains. The Europe of the sixteenth century, although only imperfectly Christianized and educated, was vastly different from the barbarian Europe of the eighth century. Yet, we cannot escape the conclusion that from 312 to 1517, a period of twelve hundred years, much of the real spiritual force of the Church was lost. Outwardly it appeared to be strong and powerful; inwardly it was stricken with a spiritual dry rot from which it has not yet entirely recovered. The Bible had been a closed book to practically all except priests and monks. The keen moral edge of Christianity, which had made it so powerful in the beginning, had been dulled, and Jesus as a loving friend and Savior to sinners was unknown to the great mass of men and women whom He came "to seek and to save." It was indeed a period of spiritual decline for the Church.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Why did Paul, rather than Peter, become the first great missionary to the Gentiles?
2. What three historical events greatly influenced the life of the early Church?
3. What were the chief elements of strength and weakness in ancient paganism?
4. What elements of strength and weakness did early Christianity have?
5. How does modern paganism differ from ancient?
6. Is the Church conquering modern paganism?
7. What Roman Emperor granted full religious freedom to Christians? When did Christianity become the chief religion of the Empire?
8. What do we mean by the Heresies of the Church? Who were the Apologists?
9. What chief influences helped to paganize the early Church?
10. What effect did the rise of the Popes have upon the Church?
11. Do the Middle Ages deserve the name, "Dark Ages"?
12. How much of ancient pagan belief and practice still remains in the modern Church?

Chapter Five

REFORMATION AND RESTORATION

Reformations In the Church: The great reformations in the Church came as a logical result of certain forces and influences which had their roots deep down in the life of the Middle Ages. At the close of this period the Church was hopelessly corrupt so far as its official organization was concerned, and all efforts from within for reform had been smothered by the popes and emperors who, it was claimed, held their thrones through the favor of the head of the Church. While the Church was seemingly at the height of its power there were many "heretical groups" which were protesting with a "terrible earnestness" against its corruption. These protests were both religious and political in their nature. Men could not keep still when their country was being robbed by a foreign and unfriendly church, and those who dared to speak were not long in getting the ear and the sympathy of the masses.

The revival of learning, with its utter contempt for the dogmatic scholarship of the Church, and its study of the Scriptures in their original languages, had created among those who were seeking the truth a distrust in human authority and an earnest desire for more free-

dom of thought. The reformations did not get under way until certain great personalities in the Church became obsessed with this desire for more freedom of thought and with a passion to rid the Church of its corruption. The following are the really great names of the Protestant Reformation:

John Wycliffe (1320-1384); John Huss (1367-1415); Martin Luther (1483-1546); Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531); and John Calvin (1509-1563). Wycliffe lived and did his work in England at a time when conditions were ripe for revolution and reform. His greatest contribution was probably his translation of the Vulgate version of the Bible into English. John Huss was a Bohemian and his country was also ready for a reformation when he came into leadership. He was excommunicated by the Church in 1413 and retired to write his great book upon the nature of the Church. In 1414 he was charged with heresy and without any show of a fair trial was burned in 1415. He was one of the greatest preachers and revolutionary spirits of his day, and the fires which his enemies lighted around his body lighted the way for those greater reform movements which were to follow.

Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, who came later, have been called the big three of the Protestant Reformation. Most Church historians look

upon Martin Luther as the central figure of the Reformation. Because of his deep religious nature, his loyalty to the Scriptures, his patriotic zeal, his fearlessness and his popularity with the common people, he was able to combine in his own person all of the reformatory elements which had come to him from the past. The Reformation under Luther did not reach its highest ideal—"the restoration of Christianity to its primitive purity and simplicity." It was full of glaring inconsistencies. But in spite of its weakness at many points of both doctrine and practice, it marked a long step forward in the progress of the Church. When Luther died, the Augsburg Confession, the creed of Lutheranism, was accepted by thousands and the success of the Reformation was assured. The Swiss Reformation under Ulrich Zwingli was more of a civil and moral revolution than that of Luther among the Germans. It was more quiet and also more thorough. The sentiment in Switzerland was so strong against the Roman Church that the fiery preaching of a Luther was not needed to bring about reform. Many of the fine elements in Protestantism came out of the Zwingli reformation and the world and the Church is much richer because he lived.

In many respects the Reformation under the leadership of John Calvin was a continuation

of the movement under Zwingli, although he had little respect for Zwingli, and much for Luther. Calvinism was a sort of gathering up of the vital elements in both Zwinglianism and Lutheranism and an attempt to unify the Protestant forces. And yet there was very much in the movement which was entirely fresh and original. When Calvin began his work in Geneva the Reformation had been under way for twenty years, and had gained much prestige Though he built upon the foundations of both Zwingli and Luther, he was far from being the disciple of either. These men had carried on much of their work in subserviency to the State. This method Calvin rejected unconditionally. For him "the Church must not only not be dependent on the State, it must rule the State." Calvinism was more evangelical than Lutheranism, less national, and far more catholic in its spirit. It was more earnest in its attack upon immorality and corruption and in its attempt at church discipline than Zwinglianism.

The effects of the Reformation of Calvin upon religious and political conditions in the world were tremendous. It was very important so far as those of us who live in this New World are concerned. Calvinism was dominant in the French Revolution. It was one of the biggest factors in the Reformation in Scotland. It was largely responsible for the Nonconformist

movement in England out of which many of our modern free Protestant Churches have come. Puritanism was Calvinistic in its doctrines and point of view. The congregation of our Pilgrim Fathers which met at Leyden under the ministry of Robinson was known as a "staunch defender of Calvinism." And with these same Pilgrim Fathers the Calvinistic theology and the principles of civil and religious liberty came to America, as one of the dominant religious and political influences in the New World. It would be hard to estimate the influence of Calvinism on American life and institutions.

The Rise of Denominationalism: Following the Protestant Reformation, for purely political reasons, the leaders of the nations got together and agreed upon a policy of toleration among the various sections of the Church. This measure of toleration did not grow out of any tolerant attitudes which the Reformation had created, but out of the fact that it was the easiest way to maintain the peace of Europe for a season.

When toleration, freedom of conscience in matters of faith, and the right of each individual to read and interpret the Bible himself began to be the established principles among the main Protestant bodies, the era of modern denominationalism was born. The Church be-

came more and more divided as groups of earnest people here and there felt free to organize themselves into independent Christian communities. The Reformation had gained freedom from Rome, but it had laid the foundations for a divided Church. Competition rather than co-operation became the rule among religious bodies. The economic background in England encouraged division in the Church and increased the spirit of competition. In Europe and in America sectarianism became almost as much of a stumblingblock in the way of the progress of the Church as Romanism had been. The various denominations were just as bitter in their hatred toward one another as they were toward the Roman Catholic Church. Sectarianism was so rampant in America at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the most influential and thoughtful people were beginning to be disgusted with all religion. That chapter in the history of the Christian Church which records the rise of denominationalism and sectarianism is not one that we can look upon with any great measure of pride.

The Idea of Restoration: There is a sense in which the Protestant Reformation was from the beginning a movement toward restoration, and yet we are justified in making a distinction between the terms "restoration" and "reformation," in their relation to Church history.

In many respects the results of the Reformation were disappointing. Its greatest leaders were content with measures of reform which "fell far short of the restoration of primitive Christianity." They did not get any further than a protest against Catholic Christianity, and Catholic Christianity and Primitive Christianity are very different things.

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) urged all religious bodies to take "the Holy Scriptures for their rule of faith and practice," and suggested "the New Testament Church as the norm and model of the Church which was to be." However, the definite idea of restoration did not appear until later. About 1728 a movement was started in Scotland by John Glas. Leaving the national Church, Glas and Robert Sandeman established a number of independent congregations. The purpose of Glas and his followers was that of restoring the practices of the primitive Church concerning the ordinances and public worship. In 1799 a congregation was organized in Edinburgh by two brothers, James and Alexander Haldane. These men were moved by their passion for evangelistic work to go out at their own expense and preach the gospel and organize other congregations. They advocated the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice for Christians. With the exception of Comenius there does not seem

to be any idea of the unity of the Church in these earlier movements toward restoration. It remained for America to produce the most active and far-reaching movement toward restoration thus far in the history of the Church.

Thomas and Alexander Campbell: The great movement toward restoration which began in America at the opening of the nineteenth century centers around two characters—Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander. Thomas Campbell was born in Ireland in 1763, and was Scotch-Irish. His father had been a Roman Catholic but had renounced this Church to become a member of the established Church of England. Thomas Campbell was never quite satisfied with the Church of England and after his conversion became a member of the "Anti-Burger branch of the Seceder's wing of the Presbyterian Church." He was educated in the University of Glasgow and became a teacher and preacher. At that time the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and Ireland was very much divided. Thomas Campbell became interested in the unity of these various elements, but did not meet with much success in his efforts toward this unity. Because of ill health, in 1807, leaving his family to come later, he sailed for America.

Arriving in America, he was received by the Presbyterian Church and given a charge in

Washington County, Pa. His scholarship, and exceptional ability as a teacher and preacher, soon gained for him a large hearing and a wide circle of friends. This growing popularity caused considerable jealousy among some of the other preachers, and within a year Campbell found himself in trouble. The branch of the Presbyterian Church for which he was preaching practiced close communion—they would not sit at the Lord's Table with any except those of their own religious body. In one of the communities where Thomas Campbell was preaching there were some families of other religious bodies and he invited them to the Lord's Table on equal terms with the Presbyterians. Immediately charges of heresy were brought against him by his enemies and he was so severely condemned by the synod that he felt it necessary to withdraw and become an independent preacher.

In 1809 Thomas Campbell, and those who followed him, organized "The Christian Association of Washington," and Campbell wrote the famous "Declaration and Address." At this time, Alexander Campbell the son, who was born in Ireland in 1788, and who was to be the future leader of the movement, came on the scene. He and the rest of the family arrived in America in 1809 and came on to Washington to meet the father. Alexander Campbell had

definitely decided to become a minister and had come under the influence of some men in the University of Glasgow who had greatly unsettled his religious views. When he joined his father in 1809 "The Declaration and Address" was almost ready to come from the press and one of his first tasks was that of helping his father read the proofs of that great document. He was so completely in accord with the position which his father had taken that he was ready to dedicate his life to the carrying out of the program suggested in the Address. In 1810 the Campbells sought membership in the Synod of Pittsburgh for themselves and for "The Christian Association," but their request was denied by a unanimous vote of the synod. This resulted in the organization by the Association of the Brush Run Church in 1811, which was the first distinct congregation of this American movement toward restoration.

Principles and Growth: The ideal, or aim of the movement toward restoration which began with the Campbells, was very definite, and was distinctly different from that of most of the earlier movements. It grew out of the deep dissatisfaction on the part of Thomas Campbell with the divided condition of the Church, and the consuming passion of his great soul for the unity of the Christians in all denominations. However, Thomas Campbell had more than an

ideal. He saw clearly what was standing in the way of his ideal, and he had a clear-cut, definite method whereby he hoped to realize his ideal. While the ideal, and to a very large extent the method of its realization originated in the massive intellect of Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, who was far more brilliant on the platform and in the pulpit than his father, became the popular champion of both the ideal and the method. It was the attack of Thomas Campbell upon the things which stood in the way of unity, and his suggested method of unity, which brought down upon his head the severe condemnation of the religious leaders of his day.

The clear and well-defined basis of action which he presented to his followers was—"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." This basis of action led, naturally, to the adoption of the platform upon which the Campbells proposed to unite all Christians. The chief means to be used in the realization of this ideal was the restoration of the Church of the Apostolic Age as it is described in the New Testament. Here it was distinctly stated that the object was to "come firmly and fairly to original ground, and take up things just as the Apostles left them." In this way "becoming disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of

intervening ages, they could stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning."

In the resolutions which were adopted in the organization of "The Christian Association" are these words: "This Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all, assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, as standing connected in that relation." In the beginning the Campbells did not have in mind the organization of a separate religious body. They planned to unite the Christians in all religious bodies, to convince the members in the existing churches that they ought to give up every article of belief and every practice which was not as old as the Apostolic Church. They did not claim infallibility either for themselves or their method. They approached the question of unity with an open mind, and were not afraid of any new truth which they discovered in their study of the Scriptures. Thomas Campbell said: "If we have mistaken the way we will be glad to be set right. . . . We by no means claim the approbation of our brethren as to anything we have suggested for the promotion of the sacred cause of Christian unity, further than it carries its own evidence along with it; but we humbly claim fair investigation of the subject, and solicit the assistance of our brethren for the car-

rying into effect what we have thus weakly attempted." This reveals the spirit of the real scholar, and there was nothing in common between this attitude and the bigotry which characterized the religious leadership of Thomas Campbell's day.

When the Campbells began their study of the New Testament and the Church which is described in the New Testament, they came to a number of important conclusions. They discovered that infant baptism was not practiced in the Apostolic Church, and that immersion was the original form of Christian baptism. They at once gave up the practice of infant baptism and were themselves immersed. This new attitude and practice brought them into favor with the Baptists, with the result that they were gladly received as preachers in Baptist Churches, and in 1812 the Brush Run Church was received into the Redstone Baptist Association. In 1823 Alexander Campbell began the publication of *The Christian Baptist* in which he advocated "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" as the basis for the unity of all Christians. Following a break between Alexander Campbell and the Redstone Association in 1823, a congregation was organized at Wellsburg, Va., and was received into the Mahoning Baptist Association in Ohio. In *The Christian Baptist* Campbell criticized the

Baptists freely, and urged them to accept all of the principles of his movement toward restoration, and by 1825 opposition to his principles had become very bitter. About this time, through the influence of Walter Scott, an evangelist who became one of the great leaders in this new movement, the whole Mahoning Baptist Association accepted Campbell's position. In 1830 the final break with the Baptists came and Campbell changed the name of his paper to *The Millenial Harbinger*. The movement was now a distinctly independent religious body, and as such began to organize congregations of believers. These congregations wore only Scriptural names such as Church of Christ or Christian Church.

The next important step in the progress of the movement, and one of the most important in its history, was the union with the followers of Barton W. Stone in Kentucky between 1832 and 1835. Stone and Alexander Campbell had met in 1824 and discovered that they were working along the same lines and toward the same ends. All of the Stone movement did not unite with the followers of Campbell, but the majority of its outstanding leaders did, and their contribution was one of the most vital elements which entered into the future progress of the united movement.

Present Condition of the Movement: More than a hundred years have passed, and this movement toward unity through restoration has grown until today it represents a religious body with a world membership of nearly two millions with mission stations on most of the foreign fields, and some of the outstanding educational institutions in America. Following the migration of the population across the great central States the movement firmly entrenched itself in their religious and social life, and it has pushed on to the farthest American frontier with notable success. As the largest purely American religious movement, and as a movement thoroughly in sympathy in both thought and practice with that spirit of democracy which has been the expansive force in American history, it has come to hold a place of power and influence in the life of the nation.

What has become of its original ideal during this marvelous period of expansion? Here a vital and much-needed criticism of the present condition of the movement is needed. A keen student of history has suggested that one of the biggest temptations which comes to any religious movement is that of making devotion to its ideal a substitute for the realization of that ideal. The religious movement started by the Campbells has not been free from this temptation. When it developed into a separate group

its leaders realized that it must function both in the local community and in a larger way as a Christian Church. In their desire to perfect the organization of a rapidly growing religious body the tendency has been to forget, or to put in the background, the Campbells' ideal for the unity of all Christians.

The Campbells never yielded to the necessity of a separate religious body as an end in itself. It was to be a means whereby the practicability of the restored Apostolic Church as a basis for the unity of all Christians might be demonstrated, and an agency or center through which and out from which their influence for unity might work. The danger which faces the movement at present is that its local congregations shall become so much interested in their work as local congregations, and its larger agencies so much interested in their work as representatives of the local congregations in the larger tasks of the kingdom, that the movement shall cease to have any definite influence for the unity of the Christian world. This puts the movement on the same basis as the other great religious bodies in America with no more influence toward unity than the rest of them. This movement must continue to function through its local congregations and its larger agencies as a Christian Church; but to be true to its

historic ideal it must do more than this. It must be a religious body with a passion to unite the divided followers of Jesus Christ. It must be a religious body with an ideal and a method for unity which stands out distinctly above all its other activities. The leaders in this movement were the real pioneers for unity in America. Its present leadership and membership are obligated both by their history and by the passion of their hearts, and by the growing sentiment for unity among all the religious bodies, not to let this leadership pass out of their hands, and to settle down to become nothing more than a denomination among the denominations.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What were the chief causes of the Protestant Reformation?
2. Name five of the great leaders in this Reformation.
3. Which one of these leaders has had the largest influence on the religious thought of America?
4. How do you account for the rise of denominationalism?
5. What is the difference between the terms "reformation" and "restoration"?
6. Who were the leaders in the great American movement toward restoration?
7. Why did Thomas Campbell leave the Presbyterian Church?
8. What was the ideal of the Campbell movement?
9. What method of unity did the Campbells propose?

10. When did the movement become a distinct religious body, and why?
11. What has happened to the original ideal of the movement?
12. Is the Christian Church as aggressive in its leadership toward unity as it should be in the light of its history?

Chapter Six

THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

Importance and Name: The most important unit in the Church of Jesus Christ is the local congregation of disciples or believers. In joining the Church we first become members of this unit. The Christian who is not identified with some local unit of the Church, whose letter or membership certificate is hid away in some drawer or trunk, is not counting for much in his Christian life. The Christian who professes his interest in the Church in general but refuses to support any particular local congregation, is denying the genuineness of his Christianity. The Christian with any real interest and sense will work with some local congregation.

The local congregation, to be effective, must work with the whole body of Christians, but in itself it is essential and fundamental. The local congregation which you have joined is a part of that religious body which has grown out of the movement toward restoration begun by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. In the organization of local congregations this body has tried to be true to its original method, and these congregations have been made as nearly as possible like the congregations of the Church

which is described in the New Testament. No rigid forms have been prescribed by any group with authority to act, but the general practice has been very much the same among the congregations.

The early leaders in the movement often made this statement: "We do not claim to be the only Christians; but we do claim to be Christians only." By this they meant that they refused to wear any party names. They were sometimes called "Campbellites" by others, but they always resented this name and never used it themselves. When the Campbells and their followers began to study the New Testament in their attempt to restore the Apostolic Church, they discovered that the names by which the various denominations of their day were known, were not known in the New Testament as names of local congregations. Most of them were not even Scriptural names. They found that all these names, which were the source of division and strife and confusion in the Church, were purely human in their origin, and that the New Testament was very clear as to the names by which the earliest followers of Jesus were known. They also found definite names for the earliest local congregations.

The individual followers of Jesus were designated by such names as "believers," "saints," "brethren," "disciples," "disciples of Christ,"

"Christians," "children of the Kingdom," "saints of God," and "heirs." They did not find any people going by the name of "Paulites," or "Peterites," or "Jamesites." They did not even find any Christians going by the name of "Baptist." They did find Paul severely criticizing the believers at Corinth for trying to organize parties around the names of human leaders in the Church. (1 Cor. 1:10-17.)

The local congregations of the Apostolic Church were known as "The Church," "The Church of God," The Churches of God," "The Church of the Lord," "The Churches of Christ," and "The Household of God." They did not find any local congregations wearing the name of John the Baptist, or Paul, or Peter, or John or any of the other Apostles. The name Presbyterian comes from a term which is used in the New Testament to describe an officer in the local congregation, but nowhere is there any trace of a Presbyterian Church among the early Christians. This name, as does the name Methodist, the name Episcopal, and many other names, signifies a method of work or a plan of organization. The names "Church of Christ," and "Christian Church" are clearly implied or stated in the New Testament. They are universal in their appeal and have nothing in them to suggest partyism or strife. The congrega-

tions which wear these Scriptural names have nothing to explain and nothing for which they must apologize before the world. They are on original ground. These are names which any Christian, no matter what party name he may be travelling under, can recognize and accept without question. They are the names which will stand in the day when the unity of Christians becomes a reality.

Requirements for Membership: Alexander Campbell approached the problem of the restoration of the Apostolic Church from the standpoint of his desire to promote unity among Christians. His first question was, "What did the Apostles require as conditions of membership in the Church?" He did not attempt to formulate a complete Biblical theology or a system of Church government as a basis of unity. However, the congregations in the movement which he helped to start have been very definite in their requirements for membership. And they have insisted, with plenty of tradition and Scriptural authority, that these requirements are the same as those of the Apostles.

In the record of the birthday of the Church in the second chapter of Acts, it is stated that the disciples continued steadfastly in the work of the new organization, and that "The Lord added to them daily those who were being saved." The requirements of membership in

the Church lead us to ask the question which was asked constantly of the Apostles and earliest preachers, "What must I do to be saved?" When we have let the New Testament answer that question, we have discovered the requirements for membership in the Apostolic Church.

A careful examination of the various cases in the Gospels, and especially in the Book of Acts, leads to the conclusion that the following major elements entered into salvation as it was offered by the Apostles through Jesus Christ: a genuine faith, or belief in Jesus as the Christ the Son of the Living God, as Lord and as Savior; a genuine repentance for having rejected or failed to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, and a complete change, putting the whole life against sin; a public confession or profession of faith in Jesus Christ before witnesses, either many or few; and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ "for the remission of sins." When people had met these conditions they were counted among the saved, and were among those whom "the Lord added to the Church daily." These simple steps are still considered as essential for membership in those local congregations which are fashioned after the pattern of the Apostolic Church. They are so plain and definite that no one need become confused, and they are steps which can be taken by all who would find the full Christian life.

Officers of the Congregation: When the Campbell movement began there was much confusion over the various offices and officers in the local congregation. A study of the New Testament revealed the fact that in the Apostolic Church three general classes of officers were mentioned. There were "bishops" or "elders" or "presbyters"; "deacons," and "ministers" or "evangelists." The term "elder" was probably first used to signify the older men in the congregations, and is used in the New Testament along with the terms which are translated "bishop" or "presbyter." The term is also translated "overseer" in some places. (Acts 20:17-35.) The qualifications for the office of an elder in the local congregation are set forth in the following passages of Scripture: (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2, 17-22; 1 Peter 5:2-4.) In the New Testament the elder is spoken of as an "overseer" of the spiritual interests of the local congregation. There is no Scriptural sanction for the office of elder or bishop over a group of local congregations. This is a purely human arrangement which came later than the Apostolic Age. The office of elder is a highly important office in the modern Church. It is a distinct honor to be elected elder in a local congregation. A group of consecrated elders always make a great Church.

The office of "deacon" in the Apostolic Church was created to meet a very definite need. (Acts 6:1-6.) The deacons had charge of the temporal or material interests of the early groups of believers. One of the finest flowers which grew in the early Church was that of charity. The deacons administered the charity funds, and probably helped to raise them. In those congregations where property was held in trust to be used only for the Church, the deacons became the administrators. The qualifications of a good deacon are stated by Paul. (1 Tim. 3:8-17.) The office of deacon in the modern Church is a very important one. There has never been a time when the Church was so intimately connected with the economic and material life of the world as it is in our day. With great buildings to erect and maintain; with all the general expenses of a gigantic business establishment falling upon it each year; with a large share of the charity and relief work of the community often falling upon it, and with the larger work of the Kingdom constantly depending upon the local congregation for support; there never was such great need for consecrated men with brains and business ability to fill the office of deacon. The deacons in the local congregations are the men who "keep the home fires burning" and also furnish the fuel for those who are in the "front

line trenches'' out on the far-flung battle lines of the Kingdom. Their importance can never be overestimated. It is an honor to be a deacon in any local congregation.

The Apostolic Church had ''teachers,'' ''ministers,'' and ''evangelists.'' At first the teachers do not seem to be designated as officers, but they came, very early in the history of the Church, to be important factors in its organization and progress. The terms ''minister'' and ''evangelist'' were both applied to the same person in the Church. (2 Tim. 4:1-5.) The terms ''minister'' and ''teacher'' were also applied to the same person. (1 Tim. 4:6-16.) The ministers of the congregations were also called ''pastors'' (Eph. 4:11) and ''preachers'' (Romans 10:14). In the beginning the ministers and the evangelists probably travelled from place to place and preached for the established congregations and to the unbelievers. Later on they came to be the regular leaders of certain congregations, and from the statement of Paul in the ninth chapter of First Corinthians, ''even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel shall live by the gospel,'' we may believe that they were supported by the free-will offerings of the congregations, brought regularly on the first day of the week. The terms ''pope'' and ''priest'' which came later in the history of the Church and which

are still in use in some religious bodies, are not known in the New Testament as titles of officers in the Church. To call any officer or minister in the Church "Holy Father" is to run counter to one of Jesus' most specific sayings, "Call no man your father (that is spiritual father) on earth, for one is your Father, even He who is in heaven." The title of "reverend" or "doctor" is not applied to the ministers in the Apostolic Church.

The Christian ministry is one of the highest offices among men. Speaking as one of the finest representatives of this office Paul said: "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." The minister of Jesus Christ stands between sinful men and a loving God, between a God who is seeking men through Jesus Christ and men who have lost their way to God through the blindness of sin. He is first of all a spokesman for God. And when men have found God through Jesus Christ, and have taken their place in the local congregations as Christians, the task of the minister then, in the words of Paul again, is "the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The ministry of the Church calls for the best. It needs only the best. Its challenge is big enough for the best young life the Church can produce.

Discipline in the Congregation: In the Apostolic Church the local congregation was the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Jesus Christ was looked upon as the foundation and the head of the Church. One of the earliest cases of church discipline was that of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. In this case (Acts 5:1-11) the penalty for violating the confidence of the congregation and of pretending before the Church and the Holy Spirit, was death. This was undoubtedly an extreme case and does not represent the general practice of the Church in the matter of discipline. But many students of this period in the development of the Church feel that discipline of this sort was necessary to impress the disciples with the fact that the Church meant business and would require real sacrifice, rather than mere pretension, from its membership. The local congregation had power to try and judge its own preachers and teachers. In one of those matchless portraits of the first century Church which the author of Revelation draws for us we have this statement concerning the congregation at Ephesus. "Ye did try them

that call themselves Apostles and are not, and didst find them false." This undoubtedly reflects a practice which was common among the Apostolic Churches. In the early Church the local congregation selected its minister and had the power to pass upon his qualifications for the position. The episcopal method of selecting and placing ministers is not as old as the New Testament.

The local congregation also had power to exercise discipline over its own members. In writing to the Church at Corinth Paul mentions the unspeakable immorality of a member of that congregation and urges them to "expel the perpetrator of such a crime," saying that he himself had already, in spirit, "consigned that individual to Satan." (1 Cor. 5:1-5.) In this same chapter in speaking of those who associate with idolators, Paul says: "Outsiders, it is no business of mine to judge, no, you must judge those who are inside the Church, for yourselves; as for outsiders, God will judge them. Expel the wicked from your company." In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians he urges the members to shun those who walk disorderly, who are loafers and busybodies, and says: "You are not to treat him as an enemy, but to put him under discipline as a brother."

The idea of any discipline over its members has almost disappeared from the modern

Church, and with a distinct loss to its spiritual life. People who are worldly and often openly immoral; people who are loafers in the Church and busybodies among the members; people whose business ethics and social practices do not square at all with the teachings of Jesus; and people whose pretensions toward charity and liberality are closely akin to those of Ananias and Sapphira, are often openly tolerated and given places of importance in the modern Church. Some question the right of the Church to attempt to regulate the personal morals of its members, and just how far any local congregation may go in this matter is an open question. But one thing is clear, the modern Church would be stronger in spiritual power, even if it were weaker in numbers, if it had the courage to exercise some of the power of discipline which is given to it by the example of the Apostolic Church.

Other Organizations: During the first fifty years of the history of the Campbell movement, much confusion was caused by the strict and literal adherence of the leaders to the Campbell's motto—"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Leaders who sought to abide by the letter of this motto found themselves face to face with many situations which the Church as described in the New Testament never faced.

Here was the matter of the type of Church buildings, of women's organizations in the Church, missionary societies, the Sunday School, Christian colleges, and the types of music and of musical instruments which should be used in public worship. Concerning most of these matters there was no sure word of the Lord upon which all could agree. The Scriptures were silent, and there was a wide diversity of opinion as to what should be done. Fortunately, for the future progress of the movement, in most cases common sense triumphed over a blind and narrow legalism and literalism, and new organizations were set up within the local congregations as they were needed. A small group became separate because of the use of instrumental music in public worship and of the introduction of the Sunday school and the missionary society. But after a few years this division did not affect the growth of the movement to any great extent. In the beginning, Alexander Campbell was himself opposed to anything in the local congregation for which he could not find an express "Thus saith the Lord." His superior wisdom soon led him to change his mind and to become fairly liberal in the matter of extra-Biblical features in the Church. Before his death he became the president of the first general missionary organization among the

churches and he established one of their greatest colleges.

Some local congregations may be over-organized, and yet experience has demonstrated that ideas and programs come to nought without some form of organization to make them effective. The local congregation which is functioning properly in its own community, and as a part of the religious body to which it belongs, will probably have the following well-defined groups within its membership: The board of officers of the Church, consisting of a board of elders and a board of deacons (women are included on this board of officers in many congregations); a group of trustees (a purely legal office); an efficient and well-planned Bible School, or Department of Religious Education, with a good staff of officers and teachers, and perhaps a director of religious education; a woman's organization for the work of the local Church, and one or more missionary organizations among the women; a missionary organization for children and young people, and Christian Endeavor Societies for Junior, High School, Senior and Young People's groups. No congregation should try to have all of the above organizations unless there is genuine need for them. The ideal toward which every congregation should work is that of a closer co-operation between all organizations with the idea

that the Church itself is the supreme and central organization. An organization which is not needed, or an organization which exists for itself (for example, some organized classes), is a hindrance rather than a help to the leaders in the Church. In the average well-organized congregation there is ample opportunity for every member of the Church to serve the cause of Christ along the particular line for which he is naturally endowed or trained. To find one's place in the life of the local congregation is to have a happy and fruitful Christian experience.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Why is the local congregation so important in the life of the Church?
2. What is the best name for a local congregation of Christians or believers?
3. What were the requirements for membership in the Apostolic Church?
4. Is the modern Church justified in holding to the same requirements?
5. Give names and chief duties of the officers in the Apostolic Church.
6. Does the Christian Ministry offer a real challenge to young men today?
7. Would the modern Church be justified in exercising as strict discipline over its members as the Apostolic Church did?
8. Should the Church try to regulate the morals of individuals?

9. Should the motto of the Campbells concerning the Scriptures be applied to matters of organization in the Church?
10. Can we find an answer to our problems of organization in the New Testament?
11. How many organizations should a local congregation have?
12. Which organization in the Church appeals to you most as an avenue of service?

Chapter Seven

DOCTRINES AND ORDINANCES

Doctrines and Ordinances: It is difficult to use these terms without confusion as to their meaning. The word doctrine has been associated with those creeds and dogmas of the Church which have been forced rather arbitrarily upon certain generations. Its root meaning is very simple. The doctrines of the Church are simply the teachings, or principles, or positions of the Church concerning the great facts of Christianity. These teachings are sometimes embodied in what men call creeds. A creed is the formulation of the common beliefs of any given group. A creed becomes a dogma when it is laid down by the authority of the Church and made absolutely binding upon the membership of the Church. Creeds and dogmas have one common danger—they lead toward division rather than unity. The history of the Church bears witness to the fact that on its birthday "the disciples were all together in one place." This unity which preceded Pentecost also followed Pentecost. To a very large extent it was maintained until men began to formulate their beliefs into creeds and make their creeds into dogmas.

The word "ordinance" suggests laws and regulations to the average person. We think of an ordinance as something which prohibits. The term is often used in this sense, but this does not include its full meaning. An ordinance is a prescribed practice or usage among any group of people; in the case of the Church it is an established practice or rite or ceremony. The doctrines of the Church have to do with its vital and fundamental teachings; the ordinances are its common and historic usages or practices. The doctrines which are taught and preached in the Church which you have joined are those which are clearly stated upon the pages of the New Testament, and which were central in the life of the Apostolic Church. They are stated so clearly in the New Testament that the Church has never felt it necessary to set them forth in a creed, and none of these doctrines are urged by any authority except the fact that they are in the New Testament. The ordinances which are observed in your Church are those which are sanctioned by the usages and practices of the Church which is described in the New Testament, and they are observed just as they were in the beginning, so far as historical knowledge makes this possible.

Father, Son, and Spirit: The doctrines of God as Father; Jesus as the Christ the Son of

God; and the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Guide into all truth, were central in the earliest Christian Church. These doctrines have continued to hold a central place in the Church. They have lost some of their original vitality by being encased in a dogma known as the doctrine of "The Holy Trinity." This dogma has been, and still is a source of confusion and division in the Church. It is not a New Testament doctrine but was developed during a later period when Greek philosophy was dominant among Christian thinkers. Such passages as "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," are to be found in the New Testament. However, the original formula for baptism seems to be that which is suggested in Acts 2:38. All that is suggested in the New Testament is the fact that in the Apostolic Church these three doctrines were prominent. The elaborate dogma of the Holy Trinity, which holds that in some mysterious way God is one and three persons at the same time, was probably not known by the earliest Church. It is better to think of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Guide, in the sense in which the Pentecost Christians thought of them, rather

than follow the lead of the Greek philosophers and the later theologians of the Church.

Paul expressed the belief of the Apostolic Church about God in these words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the influence of the Jewish faction began to wane, the Church thought of God, not only as the Father of Jesus Christ, but of all mankind. The belief in God as Father, which comes through the revelation of Jesus, is one of the supreme doctrines of the Church. The words "Our Father" were not in the religious vocabulary of the race before Jesus came. "Our Father" is the common platform upon which all men the world round may stand and meet their common problems and seek to satisfy their common needs.

The early Christians accepted Jesus as the Son of God. They did not try to explain all the mysteries concerning his birth and death and resurrection. They accepted the facts as they were and found in them a sufficient foundation upon which to build their faith. Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," became the first confession of faith of the Church. The Church then, and now, rests upon three historic facts: Jesus of Nazareth lived a human life among men; Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by his enemies; Jesus of Nazareth was raised up from the dead

by God the Father, and made both Christ and Lord. The Sonship and the Lordship of Jesus were the great themes of Apostolic preaching. The doctrine of the Divinity, or the Sonship of Jesus, is the doctrine around which everything else in Christianity revolves. When men and women are right in their belief in, and their attitude toward Jesus as the Son of God, they are generally not far wrong in other things.

Belief in the Holy Spirit was a powerful factor in the lives of the early Christians. They claimed, as one of the direct results of their baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit which had been promised by Jesus Himself. John's Gospel, chapters 14-16, gives a clear statement of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Every member of the Church should read these chapters often. The early Christians thought of the Holy Spirit as Christ's representative on earth and as the power through which and by which He was to carry forward and complete His work.

Salvation and Brotherhood: The doctrine of salvation which was central in the Apostolic Church can be stated in two passages of Scripture, one from Peter and the other from Paul: In his defense of the gospel before the Jewish officials (Acts 4:5-12) Peter said: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye

crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in Him doth this man stand before you whole . . . And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein ye must be saved." Paul says (Romans 5:8-10), "But God commended His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . For if, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life . . ." Salvation is connected with both the death and the life of Jesus Christ. Through His death we are reconciled to God, that is, we see the infinite love of God in the death of Christ and know that the way back to the Father's heart and house is open. But it is by His life, by everything which He said and did while He was on earth, that men are finally saved. It is by living as He lived, and manifesting the spirit of love which He manifested in every relationship of life, that we are to come at last into the open door of our Father's house.

The "brotherhood of man" is a distinctly Christian doctrine. Before Jesus came the world was divided into "Jew" and "Gentile"; "Greek" and "Barbarian"; "Roman Citizen" and "Slave." When Jesus said, "One is your Father and all ye are brethren," and when he

told that matchless story of the Good Samaritan, He began to undermine one of the deepest sins of the race—the sin of class, and race, and national prejudice. Catching this same spirit and ideal of Jesus, Paul declared that "God hath created of one blood all men who dwell on the face of the earth," and that in Christ, there was neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. In its doctrine of human brotherhood the early Christian Church set itself against some of the strongest and highest barriers in the ancient world. When this doctrine began to be practiced the barriers of class and race began to go down. They are still falling and will continue to fall as the Church gives greater prominence to this great doctrine. It is well to remember in this day when the problems of class and race relationships are so acute, that the Church which you have joined has as one of its central doctrines the belief that all men and women everywhere have the right to claim their heritage as sons and daughters of God the Father. (John 1:12, 13.)

Life and Immortality: When one of the apostles declared that Jesus had "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," he suggested two of the greatest doctrines of the Christian Church—the sacredness and value of human life, and the assurance of the immortality of the soul. In the eyes of Jesus all life

was sacred and full of value. When He came human life was cheap. Since He came it has become increasingly valuable. In His teachings the sacredness and value of personality are constantly emphasized. His saying, "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly," describes exactly what He tried to do, and what His Church ought to do. The sacredness and infinite value of life, its seriousness and its real worth; this must ever be one of the vital doctrines of the Church. It was this life that Jesus brought to light for men through the gospel.

Jesus did more than this. He came to make sure the much debated and doubted doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Jesus did not talk about life here and life hereafter as being two separate existences. He talked about "eternal life." The "abundant life" which He came to discover for men, was the same as "eternal life." This life, which is eternal, begins here and now. Immortality is not an external something which Jesus came to give to men. Years before Jesus lived an old wise man said, in speaking of God and His relationship to men, "He hath set eternity in their hearts." (Eccles. 3:11.) Eternity, the capacity to live forever, is something which is born in man. Jesus came to make us aware of the immortality with which God endowed us in the beginning. Man

had dreamed of this immortality for ages before Jesus came, but the belief in immortality was reserved for the scholars, the poets, and the philosophers. In Jesus the ideal and dream of immortality b e c a m e a fact. This fact changed the whole conception of immortality. Since the resurrection of Jesus, the belief in the immortality of the soul has become the possession of all who can believe in a fact of history. With this sublime doctrine the Church meets and greets those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death, and who sooner or later stand beside an open grave, with the triumphant words of its Risen Lord, "I am the resurrection and the life!"

Christian Baptism: The two ordinances which stand out prominently in the practice of the Apostolic Church have to do with the outstanding facts of the gospel—the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. The Lord's Supper was observed in memory of the death of Jesus; and the ordinance of baptism, which was the final step into the fellowship of the Church, symbolized the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in one act. The Lord's Day, as a day of worship, was also observed by the early Church in memory of the resurrection.

Jesus himself had been baptized. In His last words to His disciples He urged them to baptize others. He linked the ordinance of bap-

tism with the salvation which He came to offer men, when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . . ." When Peter took up the leadership among the disciples and preached his marvelous sermon at Pentecost, he urged those who cried out for salvation to "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." From that day the ordinance of baptism became one of the important factors in the message of salvation. In the Apostolic Church this ordinance had a spiritual significance which the Church of later centuries has not always properly emphasized. The original form, immersion, was used because it symbolized so perfectly the spiritual fact which the ordinance was intended to represent. Those who joined the primitive Church were buried with Christ in baptism. (Col. 2:12; 3:1-3.) (Romans 6:1-11.)

Christian baptism has always been connected with the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and with entrance into the Church. For those who have willfully ignored and neglected or rejected Jesus through a long period of years, baptism is an assurance that this sin has been forgiven and that they are worthy to become members of the Church. For those who have never rejected Jesus, but have loved and honored Him from earliest childhood, baptism becomes that act of complete dedication, the

submerging of self in Christ and His cause, and the act whereby a boy or a girl says to the world that they have definitely committed themselves to Christ and His Church. There are undoubtedly sins which need to be forgiven even on the part of those who come into the Church at an early age, but the sin of deliberately rejecting Jesus Christ cannot be included in that list. But for all, baptism becomes the symbol of the burial of the old life and the rising to walk in a newness of life. It is the spiritual fact that an old type of life has been put off and a new type put on, that ought to give baptism its deepest meaning in the life of a Christian. As a member of the Church, if your baptism did not mean this to you, if you are not a different individual than you were before your baptism, your baptism was an empty form. Read, and read again that wonderful sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, and you cannot miss the deep spiritual significance of the ordinance of Christian baptism.

The Lord's Supper: A number of names have been given to this ordinance in the history of the Church. A brief review of these names will help to suggest the significance of the ordinance. One of the earliest names for the Supper was the "Eucharist," the feast of joyous thanksgiving. Jesus "took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it." The

Greek word for the expression, "giving thanks," is "eucharidzo." That action of Jesus was so impressive that the ordinance came to be called the "Eucharist."

The Lord's Supper has been called a Memorial. At the institution of the Supper Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of Me." Those six easily understood words have given to the ordinance one of its most profound meanings. The Supper has also been called a Communion. That suggests having things in common, a fellowship, or a partnership. The Lord's Supper is an eloquent witness of the unity of any group of believers. This ordinance has sometimes been called a Witness. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come."

By one of the largest branches of the Church the Lord's Supper is called a sacrament, or a covenant, a feast of loyalty and devotion. The meaning and significance of this name come from the "sacramentum," or military oath of the Roman Soldier. This oath was a sacred covenant. In the early days, and to this day, the Lord's Supper has become a sacred covenant between Christians and the Risen Lord. These names are all full of meaning and they suggest to the member of the Church the value and power of the ordinance. In the Church which you have joined, following the example

of the Apostolic Church, this ordinance is observed each Lord's Day. In this Church it is generally thought of as a Memorial or a Communion.

The Lord's Supper is one of the greatest sources of spiritual power in the Church, and members who habitually miss its observance do so at the peril of their souls. There are two striking examples in the New Testament of what a proper attitude toward the Lord's Supper means to a Church. In the beginning the Church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles . . ." These early disciples were found every day "with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and finding favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those who were being saved." These Christians gave the Lord's Supper a central place in their lives, with the result that they were united in a common fellowship and purpose for a common task; their hearts were so full of gladness that they were constantly praising God; they were so consistent in the practice of their religion that they found favor

with all the people; and they were having additions to the Church every day.

Now look at another example. Word came to Paul that there was trouble in the Church at Corinth. The trouble seemed to center around the neglect and abuse of the Lord's Supper. While the Supper had been observed, the Church had largely lost sight of its spiritual significance. In his letter to this group of Christians, Paul tells them he has heard of their division and that he partly believes the report. He then rebukes them very severely and points out the results of the sin into which they have fallen: "Whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup . . . For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep." The Church that is true to the Lord's Supper and sees in it a deep spiritual meaning, is always a united Church; a happy Church; a respected and influential Church; and a growing and thriving Church. The Church that neglects or abuses this ordinance, is a divided Church; a weak Church; a sickly Church; and a Church which is asleep in the face of those forces of evil which would undermine the home, the Church and the State; and in the face of the tremendous opportunities for

the spreading of the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

The Lord's Day: The Apostolic Church continued for a number of years to observe the Jewish Sabbath, but there is no evidence in the New Testament that this day was ever confused with the Lord's Day. The day of worship for the Christian Church, and the day on which the Lord's Supper was observed, was the first day of the week. This day was held sacred as the day on which Jesus came forth from the tomb. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." (Acts 20:7.) The early disciples were urged to bring their offerings to the Church on the first day of the week. The Lord's Day as a day of communion and worship is a distinctly Christian institution and should never be confused with the Jewish Sabbath, which was the seventh day of the week and a day of rest rather than a day of worship. There is no Scripture which justifies Christians in calling the Lord's Day the Sabbath, and there is no Scripture which justifies us in calling it Sunday. The first is a Jewish name and the second is a pagan name. The only Christian name for the first day of the week, and the one which most nearly fits its Scriptural observance, is the Lord's Day. This name would give the first day of the week a

new significance if it should come into common usage. In our modern world the first day of the week is everybody's day, rather than the Lord's Day. The Lord has less consideration on this day than most anything else. On the day when the early Christians honored their Risen Lord, thousands of modern Christians utterly and absolutely ignore H i m and the Church which wears His name.

At no point, perhaps, is the member of the Church faced with more difficulties than in the proper observance of the Lord's Day. What shall members of the Church do, and what shall they refrain from doing on the Lord's Day? The fact that the Jewish Sabbath, with its idea of rest and its minute regulations for conduct has been associated with the Christian Lord's Day, has greatly confused and perplexed many members of the Church. The Jewish Sabbath is not binding upon Christians, and many of the ideas of observance which have come from the Old Testament are not binding on Christians.

But as Christians, as members of Christ's Church, we are under solemn obligation to observe the Lord's Day. A person who deliberately stays away from the regular services of the Church on the Lord's Day, no matter what else he may do, is not a good member of the Church. What shall we do on the rest of the Lord's Day if we do go to the services of the

Church? One simple principle ought to govern all of our actions on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a day on which we are supposed to honor the Risen Lord. Anything a Christian does on the Lord's Day which dishonors or brings reproach or disgrace upon the name of Jesus Christ or His cause, is wrong. In this matter conscience and common sense must be our guide, but we will do well to see that our conscience and common sense are tempered and enlightened by the teachings of Jesus and the counsel of the leaders in the Church. One of the weakest spots in the modern Church is its observance of the Lord's Day. Every member of the Church can help to make this condition better.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Why are doctrines and ordinances important in the life of the Church? Could we just as well dispense with them?
2. What did the early Church believe about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
3. How many modern religious bodies accept the dogma of the Holy Trinity as it is stated in the creeds?
4. Does your Church accept and make binding upon its membership any of the historic creeds?
5. What is the New Testament meaning of the term "salvation"?
6. Can the Christian ideal of brotherhood ever be realized?
7. What was Jesus' idea of life and immortality?

8. How important is belief in the resurrection of Jesus?
9. What should baptism mean in the life of a Christian?
10. What are the most significant names which have been given to the Lord's Supper in the history of the Church?
11. How many modern religious bodies make a clear distinction between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day?
12. Name some of the ways in which modern Christians dishonor the Risen Lord on His Day?

Chapter Eight

PURPOSE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

Marks of a True Church: A Church that is making men and women aware of God as He is revealed through Jesus Christ, and that is helping to meet the deepest needs of the human soul in its search after God, is a true Church. These are the surest credentials of the Church. Three Old Testament verses suggest three important phases of the purpose of the Church. "Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is?" (1 Sam. 9:18). "Until I went into the sanctuary and considered their latter end." (Psalm 73:17.) "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord . . . And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:1, 8.)

Saul's question is always a modern question. The way to the seer's house is always full. The human heart is always hungry for the finer things of life. The true seer occupies a large place in the life of any age. And for all who come asking this old, old question, the Church is "the house of the seer," the place of vision where men get new angles on truth, and fresh

glimpses of reality. As in the case of Saul, those who come to the house of the seer often discover a kingdom. The seer told Saul that a man who was capable of becoming a king had no business wasting his time in hunting lost animals in the wilderness. Men who are capable of thinking God's thoughts after Him, have no business wearing out their brains on petty problems and issues. Men who are capable of becoming kings in any realm, have no business wandering around in the wilderness of non-essentials. It is in "the house of the seer," the Church of Jesus Christ, that God makes people aware of the untold riches and possibilities in their own souls, of their spiritual heritage and the kingdoms which wait for them.

Sanctuary and Temple: From its beginning the Church has been for men just what that place of worship was for the man who is pictured in the seventy-third psalm—a sanctuary. This man was in trouble. His religion did not square with the facts of life as he saw them every day. He had been taught to believe that the righteous prosper and the wicked are punished. In his community this was not the case. The wicked were prosperous and arrogant and the righteous were hard pressed. He tells us that he was just about ready to give up his faith, his feet were beginning to slip. Then, one day, he went into the sanctuary. He does

not tell us what he saw or heard while he was there. But when he came out he was a different man. His faith was renewed, and his feet, which had well-nigh slipped, were on solid ground again.

The Church has done this very thing for thousands of souls. The facts of religion at its best seldom square with the facts of the communities in which people live. To the man who takes his religion seriously, and who thinks deeply on the problems of life, the world is likely to seem out of joint. One of the supreme purposes of the Church is to steady men in their thinking, to keep their feet from slipping away from sure foundations. High school and college students need to remember this. At no period in life is the world more likely to seem out of joint than at this period. As a sanctuary the Church helps men to take the long view of life when those all around are taking the short view. So long as the Church remains a real sanctuary to exalt and emphasize those things which lift the souls of men toward God, it will command the highest thoughts and feelings of men.

The Church is a temple in which men see God and hear and respond to His call to service. The most commanding leaders of the centuries have been men who have seen God. Isaiah's vision of a holy God in the temple came at one

of the darkest periods in the history of his people. The king was dead. His reign had been one of outward prosperity and success. But as one historian has observed, this success "had tested Israel with acids which are the severest, and the kingdom was dissolving. And then, when death declared the throne vacant, like the skeleton which was hid beneath the rich robes of the king, the real facts of his reign came to light." Israel found that success has fiercer trials for nations than defeat.

However, two things of tremendous importance were left in the nation—the temple of Jehovah, and a young man by the name of Isaiah in Jerusalem. This young man knew the condition of his nation. He saw the bewilderment of his people. But while others were running wildly about and listening to the many voices which were offering a way out, Isaiah went quietly into the temple to worship. And while he worshiped a marvelous thing happened. He saw God. He saw himself as a party to the sins of his people. He saw his own relationship to the task of saving the soul of his nation. And from this challenging and purifying vision he went out to become a great prophet-statesman. The voice of Isaiah the prophet brought his people to themselves in an hour of crisis; was heard in the council chamber of kings for years to come, rebuking, encourag-

ing, and comforting; called a nation away from its wickedness and backsliding to a new communion with the Living God; and uttered longings for the peace of the nations which are still vocal in the hearts of men. And it was his voice which uttered the most wonderful of all the prophecies concerning the coming of the Savior of the world and the Prince of Peace.

There is a crying need today for a leadership with a vision of God. There is need for a moral auditing of some of our most prominent reform movements, and a spiritual auditing of the whole program of organized religion. We need the Church as a temple of God, that within its sacred walls, and under the inspiration of its worship and message, while they meditate and dream dreams, the young men and women who must become the future leaders in both Church and State, might see a holy God and hear His call to service. Given the Church of Jesus Christ with a vital and challenging message, and youth with the power to see visions and dream dreams; and in the darkest hours of human history there will always be some Isaiah to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

The Commission of the Church: The commission of the Church is clearly stated in the words of Jesus Himself in the four versions of the "Great Commission": (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:7, 8.) Here you

have the original program of work for the Church that bears the name of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to improve upon these clear statements of Jesus. Three distinct phases of work are suggested: the Church is the agency through which the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be preached to all the world; the Church is the agency in which those who have become disciples are to be taught to observe all the teachings of Jesus; and the Church is to be the agency which is to bear witness to the facts of the gospel and the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

The first thing Jesus did about His gospel was to preach it, and the first command He gave to His disciples concerning this gospel was that it should be preached. However foolish and futile it may seem to be, preaching was the method which Jesus Himself used and advocated for getting the gospel claims before the world. It was the method which was used by the Apostolic Church. The Church was born following the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost. The earliest disciples went everywhere preaching the gospel. Paul believed in the effectiveness of preaching in spreading the message of the Church. (Romans 10:14, 15.) The world has always regarded preaching as foolishness, and no doubt some preaching in every generation has had a good deal of foolishness in it.

But it is still true that if "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness," "unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."

In every generation the Church has gone forward and the gospel has won new victories through the power of its pulpit. The preacher is the messenger of God to men. He is the interpreter of life for individuals, and he is also the interpreter of the signs of the times, the handwriting on the walls of his nation and his age. The preacher is a prophet of God, saying with Moses to all who would enslave human beings in any way, "Release my people and let them go"; and facing the Davids who have sinned deeply against their fellows and their God with the stinging "thou art the man" of a Nathan. The preacher is an ambassador of God, saying with Paul, "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled unto God." The preacher is a messenger of reconciliation, and unless the Church gets its message heard through its preachers, and men

actually become reconciled to God and to one another, what hope is there for the salvation of men's souls and for the salvation of human society? Men without God are without hope. Human society without some unity and solidarity among its various races and classes and nations, is also without hope. The Church must continue to exalt and recruit its preaching ministry, and whatever else it may try to do, must not neglect the preaching of the gospel.

The Church as a School: In His own ministry Jesus was both a preacher and a teacher. He emphasized the value of a teaching ministry and left some of the finest examples of the art of teaching which the world has ever seen. After evangelization, the leaders of the Church were, according to the ideal of Jesus, to teach those who were baptized all the things which He had commanded them. That expression in Matthew's version of the "Great Commission," "all things," means just what it says. The teaching ministry of the Church is to cover the whole range of the teachings of Jesus. That includes enough material to keep the Church busy for a long time. It is hardly probable that Jesus meant to confine the Church, as it would make progress through the centuries, to His own words in its teaching program. Undoubtedly He would have us include the spiritual values in the Old Testament, the interpretations

which the apostles put upon many of His teachings, and the valuable contributions which the scholarship of the Church has made in every generation, in our teaching program. But after a careful study of the teachings of Jesus, which no age has yet been able to exhaust, we can say that it would be hard to find a serious moral, social, or spiritual crisis in the life of any member of the Church for which an adequate solution could not be found in the recorded teachings of Jesus. The minor details in any situation might be lacking, but the fundamental principle of action will be there.

The Church has just begun to take her teaching mission seriously. For centuries, preaching held the center of the stage. Many church buildings which are still in use were built with the preaching ministry in mind. In the teaching ministry of the Church, when it has been prominent, the emphasis has not always been in the proper place. The teaching program of the Church must be twofold: first of all, it must take the children at a very early age and prepare them for membership in the local congregation; then, after they have joined the Church, it must prepare them for intelligent membership and create within them a type of Christian character which will make the message of the Church effective in the life of the world. In its educational program, the Church has done a

better piece of work at this first task than it has at the second. Thousands of boys and girls have been brought into the Church through educational evangelism. The Bible School has proved to be a most efficient recruiting agency for the Church. But the Church is failing in its task of teaching these boys and girls to become good members, and effective Christians in the life of their communities. Our modern Bible Schools have created a generation of boys and girls who are practically ignoring the Church and the claims of the Church upon their lives. They have been brought to the place where they are ready to be baptized, but they have not been taught effectively all the things which are commanded in the teachings of Jesus.

The modern Church, in its educational program, must approach its whole task, that of a loyal membership, of evangelization and character building, and of practical service in the community, from a scientific point of view. All the facts must be faced. Other agencies than the Church are talking much of character education, and are working out some interesting experiments. But the Church has the only message and power that can actually create character of the highest type. Character has its roots in religious truth and conviction. Character education must eventually come through the educational ministry of the Christian

Church. It will come when the Church takes seriously those words of Jesus, "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Then, thousands of boys and girls who have been baptized and who should be at the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day morning, will not be pouring out of our churches after the Bible school session along with their teachers and department leaders feeling that they have fulfilled all of their Christian obligations, and ignoring the worship and message of the Church. When the Church takes its teaching ministry seriously it will be training boys and girls to respect and honor and support the whole program of work, including the most important, the morning worship hour. And when the Church really becomes efficient in its educational program it will not be sending its youth into high school and college as moral and spiritual infants in comparison with the knowledge which they have in other fields and relationships of life. A recent writer has said, "If we are to put moral desire into the springs of action in a personality it is no minor operation. A real major operation must be performed." The Church is the only institution or agency which is capable of performing this major operation.

The Church a Witnessing Agency: Whatever else the early Church was, we can be quite sure

that it was a witness bearing agency in the world. In Luke's version of the Great Commission, Jesus reminds the disciples that they are witnesses of all those things which are to be preached to the ends of the earth. His words in Acts are specific: "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the ends of the earth." While the disciples waited in the upper room for the power of the Spirit, Peter suggested the selection of some one to take the place of Judas that he might be a "witness with them of the resurrection." When Peter was defending himself before the Jews for the healing of the lame man he mentioned the outstanding facts of the gospel, and concluded his statement by saying, "whereof we are witnesses." No word is used more often in the New Testament than this word witness to describe the work of the Church. The root meaning of the expression "witnessing" is simply telling what one knows. "To be a witness," says Dr. John A. Hutton, "is to be a witness to something. That was the whole substance of active Christianity at the beginning. It was not arguing. It was not denunciation. It was simply the telling of a story; it was the bearing witness to a testimony . . . it was the experience of an historical being, Jesus Christ, who had come and gone and come back again."

It is as a witnessing agency that the Church

carries out its whole evangelistic and missionary program both at home and abroad. The evangelists of the Church are its witnesses to the facts and the saving power of the gospel. Its missionaries are the witnesses to those who are still in the darkness and confusion of non-Christian faiths, or in the ignorance and superstition of the lowest forms of heathenism. As a missionary body the Church needs the best that its membership has to give in life and in material means. A thousand different highways invite those who would witness to the facts of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Practically every door in the world is open to the Church of our century. The old faiths of mankind are not meeting the needs of this new day. When whole nations are calling for missionaries this is no time for the Church to halt or lag behind. Those who look with indifference upon evangelism both at home and on the mission fields are ignoring one of the most vital elements in the work of the Church, and those who oppose Christian Missions are voting against one of the most specific commands of the Risen Lord. When a local congregation takes the word "go" out of its program, it ceases to be a Christian Church. When the Church loses that word "go" out of its vocabulary and life, it will have lost that which has

given its message urgency and passion all through its history.

As a witnessing agency the Church must stand for those essential ideals and principles of the Kingdom of God for which Jesus lived and died. Some of the most effective witnessing the modern Church is doing is in the realm of social redemption. When the Church is fearless in its witness to the social and ethical teachings of Jesus, something happens in human society. When Paul and Silas (Acts, 20th chapter) went to Thessalonica they created an uproar by their preaching and teaching, and witnessing. The opposition sent out this propaganda through the city: "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also." They were put on the black list as revolutionists and disturbers. These early preachers were opposed and misrepresented because their enemies knew there was something in their message which would disturb anything in the established order that was wrong. This has always been true of the Christian message. When the Church bears witness faithfully to the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ in any age it is bound to upset something.

As Dr. John A. Hutton observes, "That phrase about 'turning the world upside down' means that at the outset at least, and when the

movement was true to its proper spirit, the effect of Christianity was to disturb and attack the settled order of things, introducing that ferment of idealism and protest which indeed through all the ages has been the sign in which Christ's Church has conquered. Those, therefore, who in any age would confine the Church of Christ within walls, counselling her to mind her own business, have to meet that strong phrase which declares at the beginning and when the Church was most likely to know the terms of her commission she was perceived by the world to be a home of ideas and moral passions which, given play, will turn this world upside down."

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What is the chief mark of a true Church?
2. Does the Church as the seer's house, the sanctuary, and the temple, meet the needs of modern men?
3. Do the deepest needs of the human soul change much with the passing centuries?
4. Compare the four versions of the Great Commission and note wherein they agree or differ.
5. Can we dispense with preaching in the modern Church? Is it futile?
6. When did the Church first begin to take its teaching ministry seriously?
7. Give your idea of an efficient teaching program for the modern Church.
8. Can a person be a good member of the Church and attend only the Bible School?

9. Can the movement for character education succeed without the Church?
10. What does it mean to be a witness?
11. Is there still need for an aggressive missionary program in the Church?
12. How can the Church best witness to the social and ethical message of Jesus in our modern world?

Chapter Nine

AGENCIES OF THE CHURCH

Historical Background: The material in this chapter has to do with those agencies through which the local congregation has its part in the larger tasks of the Church. In the beginning, the religious movement which originated with the Campbells had little to do with organizations outside the local congregation. The Campbells held that early Christianity centered around the local congregation, and because they could find no Scripture which mentioned missionary societies and other organizations, they refused to accept them as a part of their movement. But when the movement became a distinct religious body about 1830, it soon became evident that some kind of organization would be necessary to carry on the work among the local congregations. County organizations were formed, and later state organizations. The first general organization to be formed was the "American Christian Bible Society," in 1845. Although Alexander Campbell criticized this new organization he became a member because of his desire to promote a spirit of cooperation among the growing churches.

At a convention of the movement which met in Cincinnati in 1849, the following resolution

was passed: "Resolved that the Missionary Society as a means to concentrate and dispense the wealth and benevolence of the brethren of the Reformation in an effort to convert the world, is both Scriptural and expedient." This paved the way for the organization of "The American Christian Missionary Society," the object of which was to promote "the spread of the gospel in destitute places of our own and foreign lands." Alexander Campbell was elected president of this Society and his views had changed sufficiently for him to enter wholeheartedly into the work of the new organization.

In 1874 the "Christian Woman's Board of Missions" was formed, and in 1875 the "Foreign Christian Missionary Society" was organized. The movement then entered upon a period of organization for the whole task of the Church. The "National Benevolent Association" was organized in 1886; the "Church Extension Board" in 1888; a "Board of Education" in 1894; and the "Board of Ministerial Relief" in 1895. Later a "Board of Temperance" was organized, and "The Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity" came into being. Meanwhile effective organizations had been started in practically every State in the Union. As early as 1909 sentiment was growing for the unity of the major organizations in the Church into a central board, and in 1919

the "United Christian Missionary Society" was organized. The "Board of Education," the "Board of Temperance," and "The Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity" were not included in this union.

State Missionary Societies: In practically every State there is a missionary society or association. The work of these organizations is vital and fundamental. After the local congregations they logically come next, for their primary work is that of keeping the home base strong and active. The local congregation should never let the bigness of the world task overshadow the importance of the work of the State missionary society. Most of these organizations have a secretary who gives his whole time in ministering to the needs of the various congregations and interests in the State, and some have a regular staff of evangelists who spend their time in the field establishing new congregations and strengthening the whole work of the Church. Some congregations are saved from death; some are merged with others; pastors are located and financial burdens are lifted. These state organizations co-operate in every way with the larger organizations in the Church and there is no conflict in their programs.

The United Christian Missionary Society: This society was organized in 1919. It includes

the following organizations which, prior to that time, were separate societies: the "American Christian Missionary Society"; the "Foreign Christian Missionary Society"; the "Christian Woman's Board of Missions"; the "National Benevolent Association"; the "Board of Ministerial Relief"; and "The Board of Church Extension." The work of this new society is divided into the following departments: Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Benevolence, Church Erection, Ministry, Religious Education, and Promotion and Service. The important work of Evangelism is carried on under the department of Home Missions, and the Young People's work, including the summer conferences, is under the direction of the department of Religious Education. This society has two regular publications, *World Call,* and the *King's Builders.* It also publishes the Year Book for all the churches each year, which includes the reports from all the agencies which report to the International Convention. Each department has a chairman and staff to conduct its own work, but the work of all the departments is co-ordinated through an officer's cabinet. This cabinet makes a monthly report to the Executive Committee of the society.

This society is under the direction of a Board of Managers (120 men and women) which is

selected by the churches in the various states. An executive committee composed of ten men and ten women are chosen by the Board of Managers and this committee meets each month to transact the business of the society. It maintains a large staff of secretaries and officers, the office force in the headquarters building, and a small army of workers around the world. Its headquarters are in Indianapolis, Indiana, in the building which was formerly used for the College of Missions. The object of the society is well stated in the following paragraph from its constitution:

"To preach the gospel at home and abroad; to maintain missionaries, preachers and teachers in America and other lands; to promote religious education in the churches; to establish and conduct schools, orphanages, hospitals and homes; to pension and support disabled ministers and missionaries and their dependent families; to assist in the erection of churches and other buildings for religious purposes; to disseminate religious information and encourage a missionary and benevolent spirit in the churches; to solicit, receive, hold in trust and administer funds for these objects; and to engage in any other forms of Christian service that will help to bring in the Kingdom of God, in which His will shall be done as in heaven, so on earth."

There was no thought in the mind of those who advocated and led in the organization of this society that it should become the final and infallible method by which the Church should carry out the Great Commission. This society is only an agency to serve the churches, and if at any time in the future it should cease to function effectively, the churches are perfectly free to make what changes are necessary in the organization. God, Jesus Christ, and the vital elements in the Christian Message, are permanent; all agencies or methods for carrying on the work of the Church are temporary and changeable.

Pension Fund: Since the organization of the United Christian Missionary Society a new organization has come into being among the Christian Churches. It is officially known as the "Pension Fund of Disciples of Christ." This fund has a general secretary and is managed by a board of twelve trustees. It is an affiliated organization with the International Convention but its relations to the Convention are fraternal and not organic. At the present time there is a temporary relation between this Fund and the Department of Ministry of the United Christian Missionary Society. This Fund will raise enough money to care for the accrued liabilities of the ministry of the Church up to the present time, and then each local con-

gregation will be asked to pay to the Fund each year eight per cent of the salary they are paying their minister, and the minister will be asked to pay two and one half per cent of his salary into the Fund each year. This will provide a pension for all of the regular ministers of the Church at a stated age of retirement.

Board of Education: The Campbells, and most of the outstanding leaders in their movement in its earliest days were educated and cultured men. As the movement grew in numbers and strength, especially after 1830, these men felt the need of some educational institutions to train leaders for the future. There was much opposition at the first suggestion of a college, and some of the preachers who had come into the movement took the position that a knowledge of the Scriptures, such as any man could get by reading the Bible for himself, was all the training a preacher needed. Some of the ablest men in the movement have not been college men; but they have been educated men, and never boasted of the fact that they had not attended college. But in spite of indifference and opposition, the wisdom of the leaders prevailed, and definite steps were taken to found colleges. In 1836 Bacon College was established at Georgetown, Kentucky. In 1840 this college was moved to Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and Bethany College was founded at Bethany,

Virginia. Alexander Campbell was the founder and the first president of this school. About 1850 Hiram and Butler Colleges came into being, and in 1855 Eureka College was granted a charter. The College of The Bible at Lexington, Kentucky, was organized in 1865, and Drake University was founded in 1881. Other institutions were then organized from time to time, some of which are still playing an important part in the educational program of the movement.

A Board of Education was first organized in 1894, but the present Board was organized in 1914. Through this Board the colleges and the local congregations work together at the educational task of the Church. The majority of the educational institutions in the movement are now represented on this Board, and the affairs of the Board are managed by a group of directors. The work is carried on under the following departments: General, Promotion, and Endowments, State Universities, Vocational Guidance and Student Aid. A staff of efficient secretaries are in charge of these departments and they are constantly in touch with the officials of the co-operating educational institutions. During its short history this Board has put the educational program of the Church on a sound financial basis, kept several important colleges from closing their doors, and raised

the educational standards of the colleges to the highest level in their history.

Board of Temperance and Social Welfare: This board is an agency through which the local congregations may work together effectively for social reform. At first this board was known simply as the Temperance Board. Since national prohibition has become a fact, it has been none the less active in its work for temperance, but has enlarged both its name and functions. In its present form it looks upon temperance work as a single item in social welfare work, and is doing all it can in every way to make prohibition a success and to encourage law enforcement. The board operates under a group of directors and the work is carried on by two full-time secretaries. Its headquarters are in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The primary work of the board has been described (1927 report) as that of "Social evangelism and popular education on social questions. . . Conferences held during the past year covered problems of peace, industry, racial relations and community welfare." The general secretary sets forth the aims as follows: "The secretaries of this Board are themselves its missionaries and evangelists. They are evangelists of the social gospel, missionaries to unchristian social situations, delegates from the Brotherhood of Disciples in co-operative work for

brotherliness where human relations reveal ill will. They have joined in promoting conferences in industrial, racial, and international relations. They have promoted understanding and good will where the forces of evil have spread ill will and misunderstanding. They have represented the Brotherhood in all those particular and peculiar situations where the churches have tried to focalize their forces in the task of Christianizing social relationships. They have done what they could to make the Disciples a force in putting the social gospel into the social order."

Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity: The subject of Christian Unity is getting more of a hearing in the world at present than it has had for centuries. Young people are demanding it, and the older people are talking about it with renewed interest. "The Lausanne Conference (summer of 1927) marked an epoch and began a new era for this great cause." The message of unity is being published all over the world. We have already noted the fact that the one feature of the movement toward restoration begun by the Campbells which made it different from all those movements which preceded it, was that of its plea for the unity of all Christians. The movement was described by Thomas Campbell as a "society for the express purpose of promoting

Christian Unity in opposition to a party spirit.'' In 1910 the feeling was widespread among the leaders in the movement that the emphasis upon unity was not receiving the attention which it deserved. In that year the ''Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity'' was formed to call the movement back to its original position and passion for unity. This association is an incorporated body operating under a group of directors and carrying on its work through a general secretary. Its headquarters are in Indianapolis, Indiana. The main work of the association is that of distributing literature on unity, and holding conferences in the interest of Christian understanding and unity. It tries at all times to keep the proposal of unity before the Christian world, and seeks constantly to remind the local congregations and their leaders of their historic position on unity. This association seeks to do the very thing which Thomas Campbell suggested in the following paragraph:

''What is the work of all, must be done by all. Such was the work of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the work to which you are called, not by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. By this authority are you called to raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down among us, and to set it up upon

its own base. This you cannot do while you run every man to his own house, and consult only the interests of his own party. Until you associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly and Christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done. We would therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important duty of association."

Independent Agencies: From the beginning of the Campbell movement there have always been a number of independent agencies carrying on missionary, benevolent and educational work without any official connection with the regular agencies of the Church. Some of these agencies have prospered and have done splendid work. Others have lived for only a short period of time and in many cases have demonstrated the futility of trying to carry on the work of the kingdom through small independent groups. The local congregations have always been free to make their missionary and benevolent offerings through any agency which they might select. However, the large majority have chosen to support the regular agencies of the Church. The rights of the local congregations have generally been respected by both the regular and the independent agencies. Those independent agencies, and the number is increasing, which report regularly to the Inter-

national Convention of the churches, are receiving an adequate support from the local congregations. For this movement to take any other position than that of the entire freedom of the local congregations to carry on their missionary and educational and benevolent work through any agency which they might choose, would be to deny one of the fundamental positions which has made its progress possible.

International Convention of Disciples of Christ: It will be noted that in this chapter the terms "Disciples of Christ" are used frequently. This is the name by which the movement of the Campbells is officially designated in the list of religious bodies in America today. This designation is given, and generally accepted by the movement, to avoid confusion with some other religious bodies. The representatives of the local congregations meet each year in their various State conventions and in their International Convention. This convention has no corporate or legal existence, and in this it differs from these other agencies of the Church, which are "all chartered and have legal standing and responsibility." Each year the Convention elects a "president, three vice presidents, a recording secretary, a general secretary, and a treasurer. . . No officer save the general secretary shall be elected to succeed himself." When the Convention is not in ses-

sion an "executive committee of fifteen members" looks after the business affairs. This committee, in co-operation with the officers of the other agencies in the Church, arrange the program of the Convention each year.

The purpose of the Convention is stated in the following paragraphs from the constitution which was adopted in 1917: "The object of this Convention shall be to promote co-operation, economy and efficiency among the various general agencies of the brotherhood; to afford facilities for auditing their accounts; to obtain substantial representation of the membership of the Churches of Christ in an annual assembly which shall consider all reports submitted to it and be advisory to our missionary, educational and philanthropic interests; and in all legitimate ways to promote a closer fellowship in the Kingdom of God."

"The annual assembly shall be composed of all members of the Churches of Christ who shall attend and enroll, whether appointed by congregations or representing themselves only. All members of Churches of Christ shall be entitled to admission to all public sessions of the Convention."

The work of the Convention while it is in session is carried on by a "Committee on Recommendations" whose members are elected in the various State Conventions by the representa-

tives of the local churches. All reports and matters of business and general policy come before this committee before they are submitted to the general sessions of the Convention for action. The constitution provides that this committee shall report "at each daily business session of the Convention: and each item of business so reported shall be approved or disapproved, or recommended to it by the Convention to be revised and again reported." The constitution of the Convention also provides that "on its application being presented to the Convention and the same being favorably reported by the Committee on Recommendations and approved by a two-thirds vote of the Convention, any general brotherhood missionary, educational, or philanthropic organization may become a co-operating organization under the provision of the constitution, provided it will agree to insert in its constitution and by-laws a provision to submit its reports to the Convention and to hold its books, accounts and all its records open to inspection of the Committee on Recommendations or the executive committee of the Convention between annual meetings of the Convention whenever such inspection is desired by either of these committees." All of the general agencies of the churches report to the Convention, and their records are open at

all time. The way is constantly open for all independent agencies to do the same thing. It is only good common sense and business judgment for the local congregations to demand regular reports and open books from those agencies through which they are seeking to do the larger work of the kingdom.

Church Papers: The Campbells recognized the value of the printed page, and from the beginning used the religious press in the preaching of the gospel and in the defense and interpretation of their religious position. *The Christian Baptist,* which was later changed to *The Milennial Harbinger,* was founded and edited by Alexander Campbell. *The Christian Messenger* was edited and published by Barton W. Stone and John T. Johnson. These papers were very influential in the early days of the movement.

A little later another group of papers, published weekly, became important factors in the life and development of the movement. *The American Christian Review,* edited by Benjamin Franklin; *The Christian Standard,* edited by Isaac Errett; and *The Christian-Evangelist,* edited by J. H. Garrison and B. W. Johnson. Many other papers have been started and discontinued in the course of the years. At the present time practically all of the State missionary organizations have flourishing pa-

pers published weekly or monthly, and papers are published by many local congregations.

The Christian-Evangelist, published by The Christian Board of Publicaton in St. Louis, Mo., and edited by B. A. Abbott; and *The Christian Standard,* published by the Standard Publishing Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, and edited by Edwin Errett, are the two outstanding weekly publications today. These two publishing houses, one belonging to the churches as a gift from R. A. Long and under the direction of a board of directors composed of leading pastors and laymen; the other being a private stock company, furnish the religious literature for the churches. A good member of the Church ought to read one good religious paper each week and know what is going on in the religious world and in his own religious body.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Why were the early leaders in the Campbell movement opposed to extra organizations in the Church?
2. Why is the work of the State missionary society so important? What do you know about the organization in your own State?
3. What missionary organizations were merged to form the United Christian Missionary Society, and when?
4. How are the affairs of the United Christian Missionary Society managed?
5. What do you know about the Pension Fund of the Disciples of Christ?

6. How does the Board of Education carry on its work? Name five colleges co-operating with it.
7. State the aims and purpose of the Board of Temperance and Social Welfare.
8. Does the Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity meet a real need among the churches today?
9. Has the work of the independent agencies been successful?
10. What is the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ?
11. How does it carry on its work when in session? How between sessions?
12. Is the printed page as valuable today in spreading the gospel as it was one hundred years ago? What Church paper do you read?

Chapter Ten

THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Worship and Service: The limitations of such a series of studies in the nature and work of the Church and the meaning of membership in the Church as we have tried to outline and suggest, ought to be evident to all who understand what a long period of history and what a wide range of subjects have been covered. In this closing chapter we hope to suggest a few things which we feel are vital to any adequate understanding and appreciation of the meaning of church membership. These studies would not be complete without some emphasis upon the things mentioned in this chapter. Foremost among these final suggestions we would put Worship and Service.

It was a great day for Peter, James, and John when Jesus took them to the Mount of Transfiguration. For Jesus it was a day of transfiguration; for these three disciples it was a day of transfiguring conceptions of Jesus, of life and God. They saw Jesus as He really was—Son of God and Son of Man. They saw the glory of the past, and they heard the voice of God. And Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

Worship, when it is sincere and at its best, is a mountain-top experience which transfigures all of life's conceptions and attitudes. Worship means "worth-ship." To worship God is to give Him His proper worth and value. Men worship the things which they value highly. When they worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are paying tribute to that which they believe to be of the highest possible value for their souls. Real and genuine worship in the Lord's House on the Lord's Day gives a meaning to church membership which those who do not worship regularly cannot know. For this very reason church membership is meaningless for thousands. Most people are living in the midst of mere things. Their philosophy of life is that "a man's life consisteth of the abundance of things which he possesseth." It is lack of worship, of any attempt to give God His proper place in the midst of these many things, that makes for so many empty seats in the churches, and so many empty and restless souls among church members.

Members should attend Church, not primarily to go through a service, to listen to fine music or an eloquent sermon; but to get their restless lives and souls properly adjusted to God and to understand the value of eternal things. Man has discovered the power necessary to run his machines. He knows a thou-

sand ways to minister to his physical comforts which his ancestors never knew. But he has not yet discovered any better way of ministering to his soul than through definite periods of worship. Church membership will be a burden rather than a delight, and you will become a liability rather than an asset to the local congregation to which you belong, unless you give worship, regular worship, the first place in your Christian life. Some say they only go to Church when they feel like going. There is something wrong with that brand of religion which does not make men and women feel like worshiping God in His House every Lord's Day. Every pastor knows, when all the puny excuses which people give for neglecting public worship are put together, they equal just about this—people are not worshiping God because God means very little, if anything, in their lives. For such people church membership becomes a mere pretense, nothing more than sham and hypocrisy.

When worship is genuine it always has its issue in practical service. Those who see God while they worship also hear His call to service among their fellows. When Jesus and the three disciples came down from the mountain to the valley, they found a boy torn and deranged by an unclean spirit. The disciples who remained in the valley could not heal him.

After rebuking these disciples for their lack of faith Jesus heals the boy and restores him to his family. This valley scene is typical of many of the practical tasks of the Church. The world is always full of unclean spirits. These spirits which wreck individuals and nations are not cast out by those who stop in the valley. Neither are they cast out by those who never visit the valley after they have been on the mountain. Worship can never meet all the demands of Christianity until it drives men and women into the valleys of service. Most of the real work of the Church is carried on in the valleys where men and women live and struggle with the fierce temptations and problems of a material civilization. Church membership has its largest meaning for those who come to worship and remain to work and serve. They undergird the real tasks of the Church. They become the real servants of the community. They are the people who actually rid the world of its unclean spirits.

Those forces in human society which destroy human souls are not afraid of the Christian whose religion consists of formal worship on the Lord's Day. They tremble when they see Jesus, and those who have been with Him on the Mount, coming to grips with the unclean spirits of destruction down in the valley where people live and struggle and suffer. Jesus made

service central in His own life, and in a very real sense all those who become His disciples are saved to serve. On the sacred altars of the Church of Jesus Christ there is always a supply of fire to kindle the souls of men into a burning flame. But remember that every spiritual privilege is a responsibility, and that from every service of the Church, from every mount of inspiration, we should bring away the sacred fire of resolution which shall make our service out in the world really effective.

The Value of Prayer: Prayer must ever be one of the most vital and important elements in the life of a Christian. The greatest argument for the value and power of prayer is the fact that Jesus Himself was constantly in prayer, and that His life is the most powerful life of which we have any record.

Following His baptism Jesus went into the wilderness to pray and commune with God. (Luke 3:22.) In His public ministry prayer was Jesus' constant source of power. After healing Peter's wife's mother, "He departed into a desert place, and there prayed." (Mark 1:35.) Following the cleansing of a leper, "He withdrew Himself into the desert, and prayed." (Luke 5:16.) Before choosing His disciples, "He went out into the mountain to pray." (Luke 6:12.) When He had fed the five thousand, "He departed into the mountain to

pray." (Mark 6:46.) While He was praying at Caesarea Philippi, Luke tells us (9:18) the disciples engaged Him in a conversation which called forth Peter's great confession. (Matt. 16:13-20.) The transfiguration took place when Jesus "went up into the mountain to pray." (Luke 9:28.) And Luke again tells us (11:1) it was while Jesus "was praying in a certain place," that one of the disciples made the request which led Him to give them the prayer which has been called the Lord's Prayer. When the shadows were gathering in Gethsemane, (Mark 14:32-35), and when He hung upon the cross, Jesus prayed those marvelous prayers which the world can never forget. (Luke 23: 34, 46; Mark 15:34, 37.) Nothing is more sure in the gospel portrait of Jesus than the fact that prayer was the natural atmosphere in which He lived and breathed, and that the roots of His creative power were in His prayer-life.

Back of His prayer-life was Jesus' faith in a God in whom He could trust and upon whom He could depend. Jesus was conscious of His relationship to God and to the purpose of God for humanity. When He prayed He was seeking to know the will of God and to put Himself in line with that will. Jesus urged His followers to pray that they too might know the will of God and realize that will in their own

lives. All that Jesus taught about prayer is based upon His fundamental conviction that there is a Father God at the heart of the universe in whom men may trust and upon whom they may depend.

One of the most real questions which the Christian faces in relation to prayer is this: "Can we actually get the help of the God of this universe in our daily life?" The bigness of the universe, and the fact that science tells us this is a law-abiding universe, causes many, especially young people who are constantly coming in contact with the findings of science, to wonder about the practical value of prayer. There are two things about the God in whom Jesus believed and trusted which make it possible to answer this question in an affirmative way. First, as a loving Father, God is always ready and in fact waiting to do for us all that a father can do for a child. The God of Jesus does not have to be bribed or coaxed. "He knoweth what we have need of before we ask." Second, we may be sure that this God of Jesus will do for His children all they will let Him do. If there are any limitations, they are at this end of the line. In answering our prayers, and in actually giving us strength and power for our daily living, God has all the resources of the universe at His disposal, and what may seem to us to be a miracle may only be God's

use of some law which is above, and more powerful than any of the laws which we know how to use. Men are using laws of nature today which were not dreamed of a thousand years ago. Why, then, should any man say that all God's laws by which His universe is governed, have been discovered? When Jesus performed what men called miracles, He was simply using some of His Father's laws which the lesser sons of God have not yet discovered how to use. When Jesus prayed He was not trying to change God, but to open His own life to the power of God. When we pray like this, we may be sure of the help of God and of the real value of prayer.

The Church and Pleasure: How far should church members enter into what are commonly called "the pleasures of life?" Is the religion of Jesus negative? Very often some one speaks of religion as "life with all the pleasure cut out." This was a common criticism in the army during the World War. It is a common criticism among high school and college students today, and among other classes of young people. Many people think of religion wholly in negative terms. When we ask a person to join the Church they ask, "What will I have to give up?" Much of our evangelistic preaching and some of our teaching in the Bible School has put the emphasis upon the things people

must give up to become Christians, rather than on the things they are supposed to do after they become Christians. A person may give up every one of the so-called pleasures of life and still be a poor church member. Every member of the Church has a right to enter fully into all the pleasures which are reasonable in their demands for time and money, and which are wholesome. In most cases it is fairly easy to draw the line between those pleasures which are wholesome and those which are not wholesome, and those which take too much time and money. But in many cases, and especially for the young, it is difficult to know what to do. In this difficulty a negative religion does not help very much. Joining the Church is not burdening oneself with a bunch of "thou-shalt-nots." There is a better way out of the difficulty.

We cannot evade this problem of pleasure. It is all around us. What pleasures may we indulge in as Christians, without taking the keen moral and spiritual edge off of life, and yet enable us to enter heartily into the lives of those with whom we associate? Take, for example, those pleasures which have always been classed as questionable—dancing, card-playing, theater-going, and to be more modern, drinking and smoking cigarettes (especially for women and girls). Church members, both young and

old, are indulging in these things by the hundreds. In the face of this situation does the modern Church have anything better to offer than denunciation and the "thou-shalt-nots" of the fathers? Are there some positive standards or principles which men and women can use in measuring their attitudes toward and their indulgence in these things? I believe there are such standards and principles, and that the time has come for the Church to put them forward in place of the old policy of denunciation which grows out of a negative conception of religion.

Robert E. Speer has reconstructed from the teachings of Jesus, four standards of conduct to which He never made any exceptions, and with reference to which His teachings are absolute and unyielding. In regard to these four things there is to be no option for Christians. A Christian must be *pure,* he must be *honest,* he must be *unselfish,* and he must express his life in deeds of *love.* In the teachings of Jesus no exceptions are made on these four counts. Purity is an unanswerable standard. (John 7:58; 8:11.) Honesty is an unanswerable standard. (Matt. 21:28-32.) Unselfishness is an unanswerable standard. (Mark 10:17-22.) Love is an unanswerable standard. (Luke 10:25-37.)

These standards are so simple that anyone can understand them. They become more im-

pressive when we ask four questions about their author: Was Jesus ever impure? Was He ever dishonest? Was He ever selfish? Was He ever unloving? In the light of these four standards, the question for the church members is not, "Can I indulge in any or all of these pleasures and be a Christian?" But, "Can I indulge in any or all of them and be pure, and honest, and unselfish, and loving?" There is nothing more to say in the face of these absolute demands of Jesus. When we face these standards fairly, the argument ends before we get started on this matter of the Christian and his pleasures. This test is a searching one, and no member of the Church should quit in discouragement because this whole ideal is not realized at once. But no matter how searching, and difficult it may be, when the Church faces its members frankly and kindly with the motive of helpfulness rather than criticism, and lays these great positive principles of Christian conduct upon their hearts in the name of Jesus Christ; it will have gone a long way toward solving this ever-present and difficult problem of pleasure.

These four standards of Jesus apply not only to the problem of pleasure, but to every relationship of life for the Christian. Henry Van Dyke has approached very near to this ideal of Jesus in one of his splendid short poems:

"Four things a man must learn to do
If he would keep his record true:
To think, without confusion clearly;
To love his fellow man sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely;
To trust in God and Heaven securely."

Giving to the Church: The work of the local congregation and the larger work of the kingdom cannot be carried on in any age which measures things in economic terms unless the members support the Church in terms of money. In recent years much emphasis has been placed upon the stewardship of money, and there is such a wealth of splendid literature in this field that we do not need to emphasize it here. The Scriptures speak more often on this matter of a man's relation to his worldly goods, his money, than of any other of the major relationships of life. The place of giving in the work of the Church and in the life of the church member is clearly stated in one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians: "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper (or as the Lord has prospered him) that no collections be made when I come." Paul was talking about special collections, and he is saying that if every member of the Church would lay by his offering every week, there would be no need for special collections. The

only way for a Church to have a full treasury, and avoid those special appeals for funds which people do not like, is for all the members to bring their offerings regularly on the Lord's Day. Those who join the Church should begin this practice the first week after they are baptized.

Giving is an important part of the regular worship service of the Church. The offering should be just as impressive as the Lord's Supper. The money test is one of the most severe tests Jesus put to men. It is one of the surest ways to measure the sincerity of the worship of the church member. It is one of the surest ways of letting the non-Christian world know how much you value your religion and your Church. When the world sees Christians put less than their lodge and club dues; less than the price of two tickets to a good show; less than the price of a cigar or of five gallons of gasoline into the treasury of the Church, it has a right to call them hypocrites. There are thousands of people in the modern Church who live in magnificent homes while they worship in church buildings that are a disgrace to the cause of Christ, and who give more for one automobile than they have given to the cause of Christ in their entire lives.

Jesus sat over against the treasury of the temple one day and watched the people put in

their offerings. He saw the rich put in their offering and He saw a poor widow put in her last penny. And the judgment which He passed upon those who gave out of their surplus, what they had left when they had had everything which they wanted for themselves, was very severe. For the poor widow, whose gift had been a real sacrifice, He had only commendation. The eyes of the Risen Lord are still upon the treasury of His Church. When His people are faithful He sees a full treasury and the leaders in the work of the Kingdom going forward with light hearts. When His people forget their offerings because they love other things more than their Church, the Lord sees an empty treasury and worried leaders, unmet obligations, and hindered work. The Lord will continue to see His cause hindered until every member of His Church puts giving in the proper place in his life.

Personal Evangelism: Church membership means that every Christian shall seek to bring some other person to Christ and enlist them in the work of the Church. The work of personal evangelism is vital both to the healthy life of the individual Christian, and to the growth of the Church. When the earliest disciples found Jesus their first thought was that of bringing others to Him. After the Day of Pentecost, not only the apostles, but members, the rank and

file of the early Church, went everywhere preaching the gospel. We are led to believe that some of the most important congregations in the Apostolic Church were established through personal evangelism. A little group of Christians moved into a pagan city, or were driven there by persecution, and in a short time because of their personal contacts and witness for Jesus, a Church came into being.

It is said that out of nearly "forty specific cases of healing recorded in the four Gospels, only six came of themselves. About twenty cases were brought to Christ by others, and were healed, not primarily because of their own faith and asking, but because of the faith and asking of those who brought them. Notice also that these twenty cases who were brought by others were hard cases, persons who would not or could not have come of their own accord. Is this an accident? Is it unimportant that while Jesus was here upon earth nearly three times as many people came to Him because they were brought by others, as came by themselves?" Should it be any different today? There are people in every community who will not attend religious services or come in contact in any way with Jesus unless they are brought by others. Personal evangelism is proving itself to be very effective in the modern Church. Many congregations set aside a week or two weeks each year

in which the members go out into the community two by two as evangelists. This can never take the place entirely of special series of evangelistic meetings in the Church, but it is reaching people for the Church who would never be reached in any other way. Personal evangelism is one of the most real and urgent of all the obligations of church membership; one that is sadly neglected by many people who are otherwise fine Christians; and one that will bring some of the greatest blessings and deepest satisfactions that can come into a human life.

Is Church Membership Worth While? If you have read these chapters carefully and seriously you ought to be able to answer this question. This important subject of "The Meaning of Church Membership," has not been exhausted in this little book. In fact, what has been said has been nothing more than introductory material in most cases. In general Church History, in the history of your own religious body, and in the field of Christian Stewardship you will want to do much extra reading. You may also be interested in following out the implications of the great Christian doctrines which have been suggested. But without this extra reading and study you have discovered that you are a part of a local congregation organized to do the work of a Church in the community where it is located, and working

through other agencies to do the larger work of the Church in the world.

The Church has a glorious history. It commands the allegiance of millions of men and money today. It belongs to no age, but to all ages. It has not yet accomplished its work in the world, but it is constantly working at the task. Whether the present period in the history of the Church shall be one of progress or decline depends upon its present membership. Here and there a congregation may go down in defeat; the Church never goes down. There may be serious breaks in the line now and then, but the forces close up the gap and the army moves on. The final victory of the Church and the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, waits upon a generation of Christians who know what the Church is, what it is trying to do in the world, and who will take their membership in the Church seriously.

I envy those who are taught what kind of an institution they are joining when they come into the Church. It took some of us a long time to find this out. Many who have been in the Church for years do not yet know. Every member owes it to the Church to know what it is and why they are in it. There will be things in every Church which you do not like. This will be true of any organization which is made up of human beings. But if you take your

membership in the Church seriously and do your part, the things you do like will greatly outnumber the others.

It has often been observed that when a man is going downstream in a boat, if he is wise, he will keep his boat in the main current of the stream and not allow it to be swept aside into the little eddies. In the Church it is always better to keep in the main current, to keep the primary tasks of the Church in mind, and not get caught in the little eddies of discontent and dissatisfaction and destructive criticism which are always pulling people their way. When you get out of the main current of the stream into any one of these eddies, your whole Christian life and your effectiveness in the Church are very likely to be ruined. The Church is in the world for Big Business; help keep it to its primary task!

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of the term "worship"?
2. What is the relation between worship and service?
3. What place did prayer have in the life of Jesus? What was His conception of prayer?
4. Is God limited in His ability to help His children when they call upon Him in prayer?
5. Is the religion of Jesus a negative religion?
6. What attitude should the Church take toward the problem of pleasure?
7. Are the standards of Jesus impossible in our modern world?